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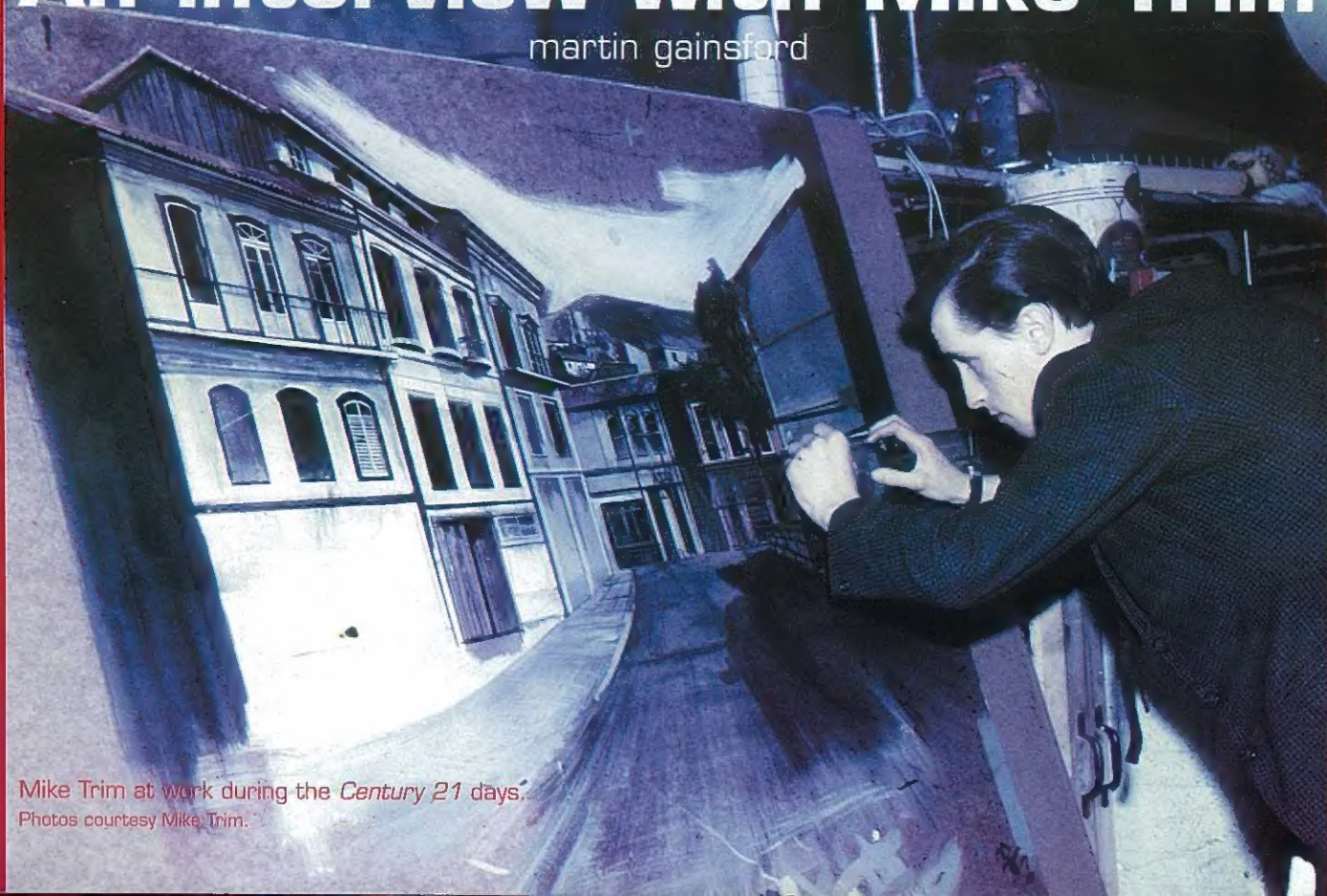


UFO Special—

Model design

An interview with Mike Trim

martin gainsford



*Mike Trim at work during the *Century 21* days.
Photos courtesy Mike Trim.*



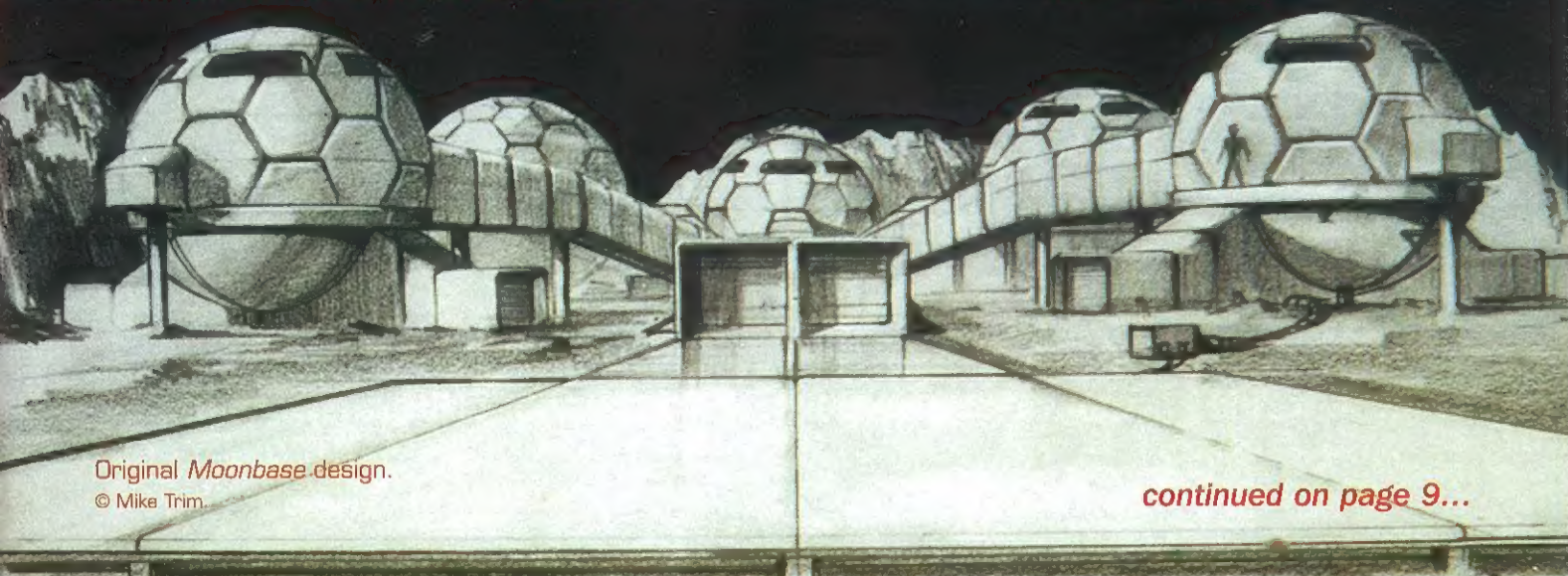
Original Moonmobile design.

© Mike Trim

Many of the most spectacular vehicles seen in the immensely popular Gerry Anderson Century 21 television productions came courtesy of Mike Trim. A friendly, modest, unassuming man, Mike has come to be known to followers of the Anderson programmes as 'Derek Meddings' greatest discovery'. It is fair to refer to him in these terms as it was the young man, fresh from art school, who designed and built some of the most memorable vehicles seen in programmes such as *Thunderbirds*, *Joe 90* and *UFO*.

His creations include the *Maximum Security Vehicle* and *Spectrum Patrol Car* from *Captain Scarlet* and the *Mysterone*, *Sam Loover's car* from *Joe 90* and the *SHADO Mobiles* from *UFO*. All of these designs were of such a high standard that, aside from wowing viewers on television screens, they were to prove top sellers when translated into die-cast form by the legendary toy company *Dinky* during the 1960s and '70s.

After the demise of *Century 21* as a production company in the early 1970s Mike worked in many mediums and gained world-wide acclaim for his incredible front cover artwork for Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds* album.



Original Moonbase design.

© Mike Trim

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Publishers Michael G. Reccia
David Openshaw
Editor Michael G. Reccia
Club 57 Editor Bob Gould
Art and Production David Openshaw
Photography Tim Hooper
Kits/Special Projects Bob Gould
UFO Special Researcher Phil Rae
Shepperton/Pinewood Geoff Topping
Distribution Tom Brown
01778 391135

Subscription/Back Issue
Enquiries Collette and Tina
Tel: 01778 391180
01778 391155
Fax: 01778 393668

Contributors this issue

sam denham • angelo finamore
martin gainsford • sarah hemmingway
paolo malaguti • jack marshall

Editorial
e-mail: post@sci-fi-and-fantasy-models.com

Web
www.sci-fi-and-fantasy-models.com
Managed by Stuart Sumpter of Westown Media
e-mail stuart@westown.co.uk

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Derek Meddings

Each Gerry Anderson TV puppet series built on the last—there was a natural progression and evolution to the team's output. Puppets became more sophisticated. Special effects more refined. Sets more ambitious. Following 1969's little seen *Supermarionation* farewell *The Secret Service*, which blended marionette work in close-up with live action footage for long shots, and the Andersons' first live action feature film *Doppelganger* (briefly known in the UK as *Journey To The Far Side Of the Sun*) of the same year, there was surely only one road to travel for the progressively minded *Century 21* crew—the road that led to a full-blown, live action television series. Hence, in April 1969, when principal photography began at *MGM British Studios*, Borehamwood, UK, *UFO* was born.

British TV of the time, with its staple SF diet of wobbly effects, wobblers sets, *Boys' Own* storylines and cheaply video-taped action, had never seen anything quite like it. Here was a slick, glossy, filmed production that looked a million dollars. Sets were colourful and imaginative; stories skillfully combined SF themes with personal drama and rich characterisation; and the FX set pieces were, quite simply, *brehtaking*. Derek Meddings and his team had refined their art to a point where vehicles and settings were virtually indistinguishable from the real thing and lavish, feature film quality effects could be produced on a television budget.

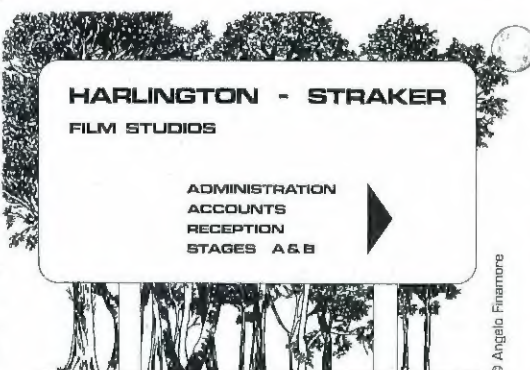
UFO is the all-time favourite SF

series of the publishers of this magazine. The show is not without its faults, with some of the storylines leaving a lot to be desired. In scope and atmosphere, however, *UFO* is quite unlike any other genre offering. Surprisingly, since 1970 when tough and troubled *Commander Straker* first walked the computer lined corridors of *SHADO* on screen, no publication has yet taken a detailed look at the exquisitely detailed miniatures and superbly crafted effects produced for the twenty six episodes—until now. In this issue we are delighted to present a true first—interviews with key personnel from the show; pre-production artwork; ultra-rare behind the scenes shots and photographs of all the principal craft; a look at surviving props and artwork of some of the lesser seen props and details from the programme.

For Dave and myself this edition is definitely 'one from the heart', an issue we'd like to dedicate to the late Derek Meddings, whose contributions to Gerry Anderson's

productions reached an all time high with the sequences he produced for *UFO*. Heartfelt thanks go to our diligent team of researchers and contributors. We hope you'll enjoy this celebration of a series that should have gone, in an ideal world that rewards and recognises quality, to seasons two, three, four and on... seems it's true what they say... *only the good die young*.

Mike Reccia,
Editor.



Issue 53

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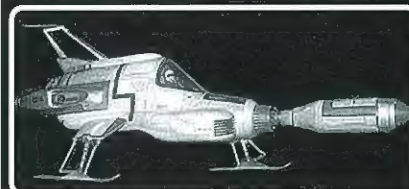
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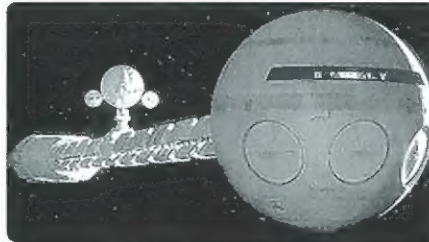
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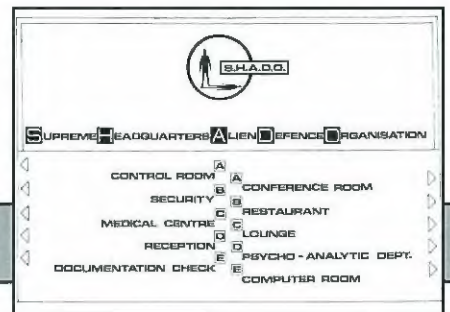
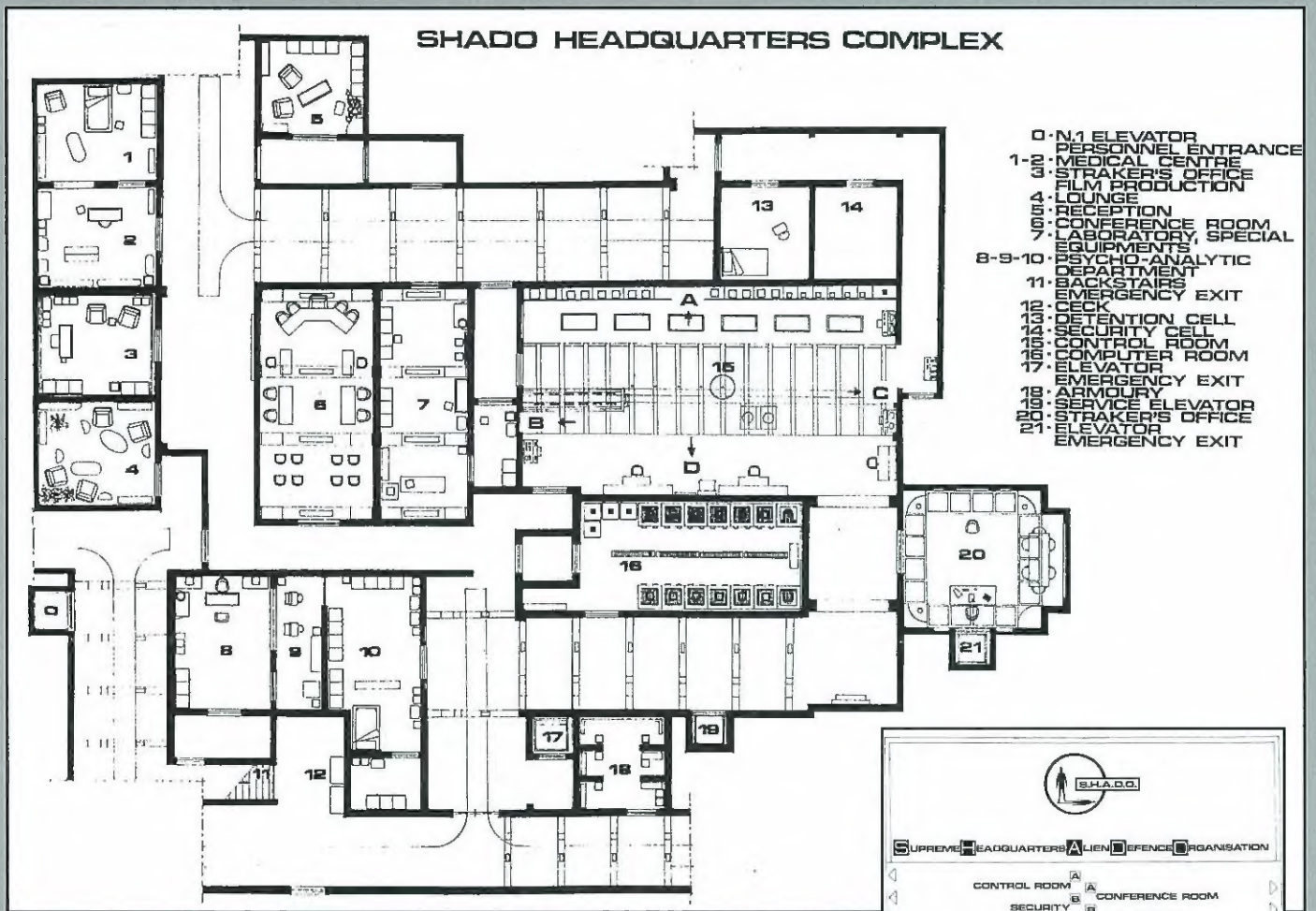
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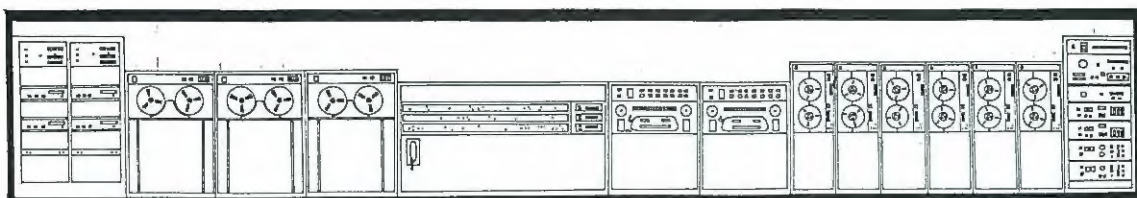
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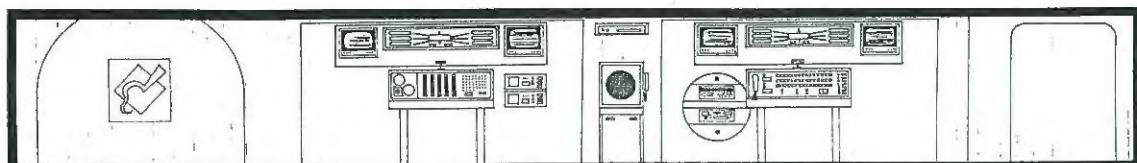
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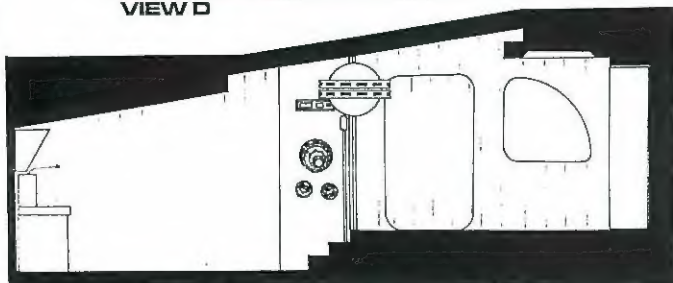
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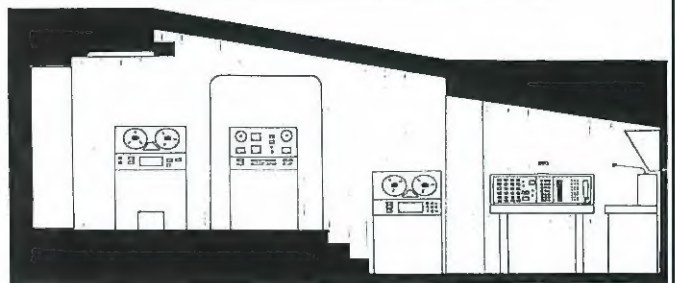
VIEW A



VIEW D



VIEW B



VIEW C



DRAWN
ANGLO FINAMORE
fx

continued from page 3...

After almost twenty years as a teacher Mike is now back doing what he enjoys most—designing and building amazing, futuristic vehicles for television and film. Working closely with producer, Sean Robinson, Mike is now responsible for a whole new fleet of magnificent craft for the movie, **CABS**. An all new concept which will bring together the best 'Meddings-inspired' special effects with cutting edge, digital technology, **CABS** sees Mike re-united with *Century 21* alumni such as Peter Wragg and he feels that, in many respects, he has 'come home'.

Mike took a break from his drawing board to talk to Martin Gainsford about his career with *Century 21* and, particularly, his massive contribution to perhaps Gerry Anderson's finest production, **UFO** —

What were your earliest artistic interests?

I don't know, really. I was always interested in art and drawing from the very beginning. I'd always scribbled and sketched and even as a very young boy I wanted to earn a living somehow as an artist or something along those lines. It wasn't until I was a little older that I had the idea of being a graphic designer. While I was at art school, learning to be a graphic designer, it kind of dawned on me that I really wanted to be some sort of illustrator rather than a designer. Running alongside all of that was an interest in all things mechanical. Rockets, tanks and cars, anything really. The two interests came together when I joined *Century 21 Productions*.

Were you particularly interested in science-fiction in any form?

Well I was but only like most young lads

are, I suppose. I liked films like **Forbidden Planet** and **The Day The Earth Stood Still** and those kind of things because they were good films but mostly because they had lots of different types of hardware which was what I was particularly into. I wasn't an avid 'Sci-Fi Fan' as such but I enjoyed it, yes. I loved *Eagle*, the comic, but really anything that had mechanical things which looked appealing to me were of interest.

How did you come to join AP Films/Century 21 Productions?

It was very simple, really. I saw an advert in the newspaper and answered it. It was for a position as a model maker. I didn't really know what it was all about but I kind of liked the sound of it and thought I'd apply.

Were you familiar with the early 'Anderson' productions?

Oh yes. I vaguely remember things like **Torchy** and **Twizzle** but the first one I really watched was **Four Feather Falls**, the cowboy one. I only really took a greater interest in it when they moved into all the hardware with **Supercar** and **Fireball XL5**. Funnily enough it was **Fireball** that was showing on television at the time I went for the interview. When I actually went up for the interview I saw a sneak preview of **Stingray** which was a real eye-opener. The quality of the show itself was a dramatic improvement on anything that had been done before. Obviously it was in colour, too, so it looked amazing. They were sort of 'top and tailing' it really when I went up there. You know, post-production stuff.

When exactly did you join the company?

They were beginning work on **Thunderbirds**, I think it was probably early May, 1964. They had only begun pre-

production about two or three months before. It was early days. I was interviewed by Reg Hill. I took some artwork with me and he had a look and I guess he was impressed with it. He took me next door to meet Derek [Meddings], who was in this very small stage where some of the model stuff had been done up to that point. That was it. The next day I got a call to say I had the job and that was it, I was in. I was living with my parents in Fulham and it saw the start of many years of treks to the trading estate in Slough where the shows were made.

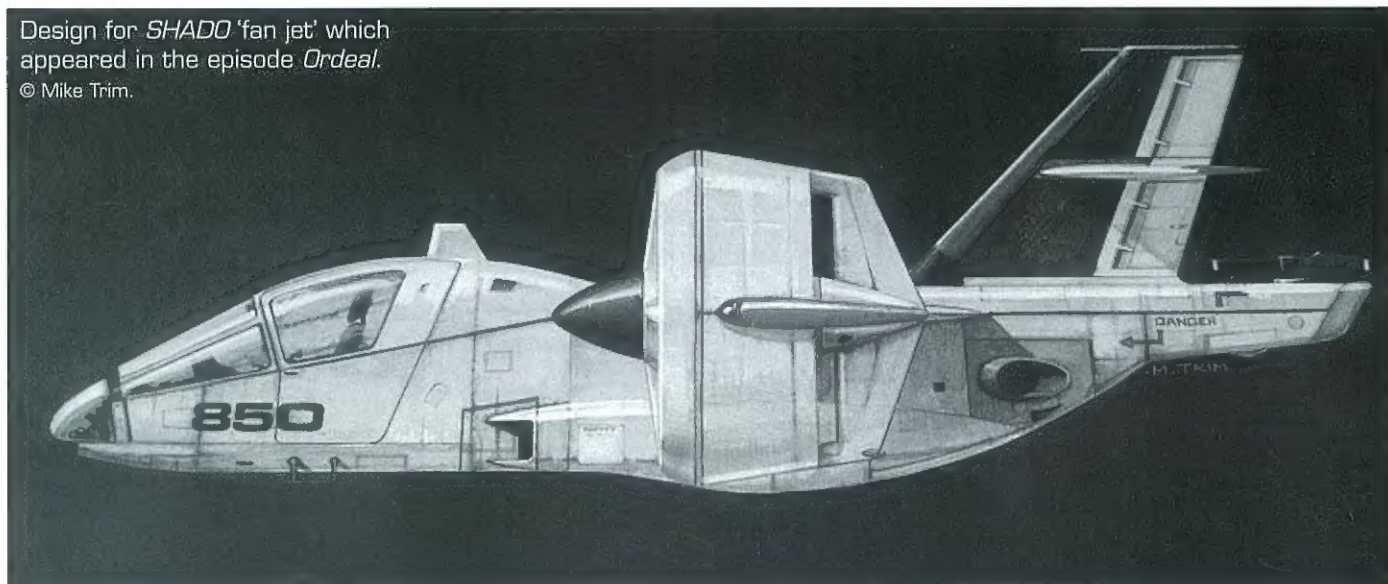
Who were your colleagues within the company at that time?

Although I did regard Derek as a mate in later years, at that point he was 'the guvnor'. He was great to work for and a lovely guy, he really was. The first few weeks were spent in an office drawing up plans of the vehicles for him, actually. He knew I could draw a bit and asked me to do them for him and I was new and did what I was asked to do. It's the same in any job. I did **Thunderbird 1**, **Thunderbird 2**, **Thunderbird 4**, **FAB 1**, **Thunderbird 3** and the 'round-house' where it launched from. The cliff house above where **Thunderbird 2** came out of. They were all done in the first few weeks before I'd even got into the model shop. By the time I was in there things had really pressed on and I couldn't wait to get involved in it all. I really got to be closest mates with Roger Dicken, you've probably seen pictures of him at the time, the 'Teddy-Boy'. We were good mates throughout **Thunderbirds** but he was one of the people that went on to do **2001**. Brian Johnson went off first and Roger went soon after. I think they were the only two.

What are your recollections of that 'defection'?

Design for **SHADO** 'fan jet' which appeared in the episode *Ordeal*.

© Mike Trim.



I don't remember hearing too much about it at the time but I've come to learn that Kubrick really wanted Derek. Gerry had no intention of letting him go, of course. I understand that they kind of offered Brian Johnson as a sort of consolation prize. Brian went off and then I think he came back and asked Roger if he fancied joining him. **2001** is very good film too. I can't say I really ever understood it or decided to read the book to find out the meaning of life or any of that but I was, of course, very impressed with the look of the film and the effects work and miniatures are just brilliant.

In a very short space of time you became a key member of Derek's team. What vehicles were you responsible for in one form or another?

When I began I was involved in 'dirtying down' the models and doing some running repairs on things which had been knocked about during filming. I did do so much that it is hard to pin down things, particularly on **Thunderbirds**. Most of the models came in from an outside company called **Master-Models**. I was put to work on them making them look more realistic and less 'new'. I did some work on **Fireflash** but really it was the secondary vehicles, you know like some of the things in the pods, that I was responsible for.

When did Derek approach you to take a hand in designing?

I remember the episode, **Pit Of Peril**. It was probably about the fourth or fifth

episode, I can't recall exactly, but it was a pretty early one. Anyway, I saw the scripts and there were these recovery vehicles deployed by **Thunderbird 2** to get the thing out of the trench, you remember the story. I cheekily designed a vehicle and showed it to Derek. You remember they had these harpoons with suction cups on the end. Basically Derek looked at them and said, "I like those. We'll make 'em". So we did and that kind of began the design side of it all for me. Roger and I built them and they worked brilliantly and we were all really pleased. Then when we did **End Of The Road** I was asked to do the truck that is full of explosives and trapped on the cliff and it just grew from there because Derek was just so busy with everything. I kind of took the pressure off of him and he trusted me to come up with good designs. When the feature films began I just took over really because he was so tied up with **Thunderbirds Are Go** and by then he knew I was capable of doing whatever was required by the scripts.

*You were responsible for a great many of the vehicles in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**.*

Yes I was. About a year after I joined the company, work began on **Scarlet**, maybe a little later. Derek had decided to re-organise the department and was intending to make Ray Brown the head of the model shop and pull me out to help him with the storyboards and the designs too. I was more than happy to do this as I'd been doing a bit of that anyway as well as the model building and dirtying down

and all the rest. I did sky backings and backdrops too, so it was an excellent start for me in the industry, really. When I joined Derek permanently Brian Smithies took over all of that type of stuff. Dirtying down and all that. Towards the tail end of **Thunderbirds**, scripts for **Scarlet** started to appear and I just got stuck in. I did the **Spectrum Patrol Car**, **Spectrum Passenger Jet**, **Spectrum Helicopter**, **Spectrum Hovercraft** and the **Maximum Security Vehicle**. I also did quite a few buildings too and the most famous, I suppose, is the **London Car-Vu** from the first episode.

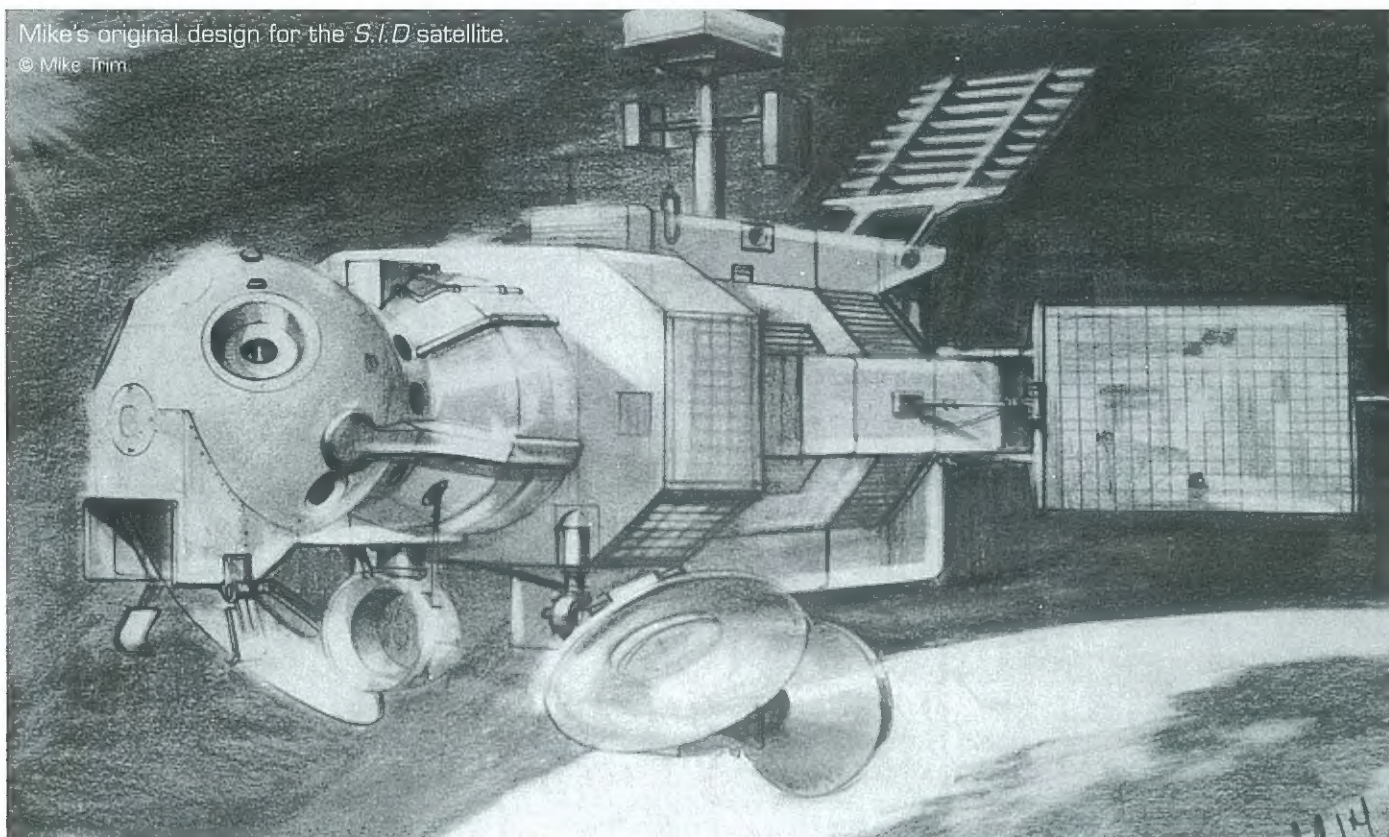
It was at this time that merchandise began to appear in shops based on your designs.

Yes it did. I wasn't paid a penny extra for any of that stuff. In the early days it was quite a novelty to go past a toy shop or into a sweet shop and see one of your designs on the front of a comic or as a **Dinky Toy** or something but after a while it would get a little annoying because they were just so popular and you'd see kids playing with them and go into shops and see great stacks of these things and you'd think to yourself if only I had been paid just a penny for each toy sold you'd be doing all right. That's not even taking in the big plastic toys that they did and all the kits in Japan.

*The look of **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons** is far more 'life-like' than **Thunderbirds**. Was there a constant intention to move toward a*

Mike's original design for the **S.I.D.** satellite.

© Mike Trim.



live action look to the shows as the puppets became more realistic?

Well, not from my point of view, but we all knew that Gerry was always intending to do live action. The designs I did for those later shows were just a natural progression for me, really. I think the more believable the design of the puppets and vehicles were, the happier Gerry was. When the films began like **Thunderbirds Are Go** and a little later with **Doppelganger** (*Journey To The far Side Of The Sun in the US—Ed.*), they very much became the focal point for the senior members of the company, and understandably so. We kind of ran things while Derek and Gerry and Sylvia got on and concentrated on the feature films and so things like **Captain Scarlet** and **Joe 90** became very much my things in terms of design because Derek was concentrating on the films.

Did you contribute to **Doppelganger** in any form?

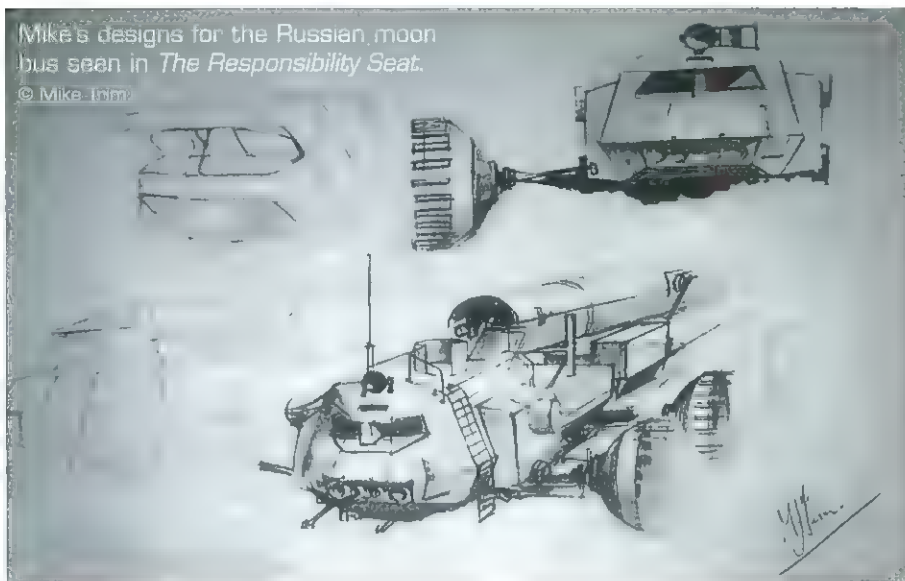
I designed the rocket's vertical assembly building. I think I did a few other bits but mostly it was Derek's 'show'. I was honestly too busy with **Joe 90**. I did *Sam Loover's car*, *Joe's cottage*, the *WIN* building and probably 90% of the things in that series. The same with **The Secret Service** too. I did all the jets and rockets and stuff because Derek was tied up with the second **Thunderbirds** film and **Doppelganger** and then he began to start to think about **UFO**.

What was the feeling within the company when the word of a live action series began to filter through?

Well, me and my mates in the model and design shop were excited and pleased, really. Several of us did feel that the puppets shouldn't be totally left behind and, in fact, Keith Wilson and Des Saunders came to me one time to talk about an idea they had for a series about a futuristic version of the Noah's Ark story. There was a captain called *Noah* and there were these huge buildings around the world and there was a disaster or something or other and, at a given time, these buildings would actually take off and rendezvous with this giant ship in space called *The Ark* and it would have been full of explorers and scientists and that kind of thing. I suppose it was a little like **Space:1999** with these characters drifting through space meeting different civilisations while searching for a place to live. I did do a few designs but they went to Gerry and he said that puppets were over and his sights were firmly set on live-action with **UFO**.

Mike's designs for the Russian moon bus seen in *The Responsibility Seat*.

© Mike Trim



Did you alter your design ideas now that you were working on a live action programme?

No, not at all. We were still dealing with a fantasy situation. The designs were driven by the demands of the scripts. It doesn't matter if you are working on puppets, animation or live action. It is the story that matters and if a story says you need a vehicle that does such and such and must look vaguely like such and such, that is what you do. The main considerations are what these vehicles actually have to do on screen which is dictated by the scripts. I think the designs in general were progressing. The vehicles in **Thunderbirds**, for example, are magnificent but outrageous. Things in **Scarlet** and **Joe** are much more believable and I have to say that I like to consider myself as someone who designs for the 'near future'. I like to have a basis in reality.

Did you look to NASA and such like for inspiration?

Obviously they were an influence, no doubt about it. The designs I was doing were always relating to the script requirements but it was nice to see that we had done something on one of the shows and then see something similar on a real *Apollo* or *NASA* piece of hardware. Around about the time of **UFO** we had the first real Moon landings and we were pretty pleased with some of the things we'd done because they were pretty realistic in many respects.

Could you tell us a little about your designs for the series beginning with **SID**?

The guidelines I had from Derek and the scripts was that *SID* must look sort of 'insecty'. Off I went and came up with this design that was sort of 'bug-eyed' with a face and antenna sticking out all over the place. So I think it kind of captured what

Derek wanted. Mostly on **UFO** I would ask Derek what needed doing or if I could have a crack at something and he'd just tell me to get on with it because by then I think he was fully confident in what I was doing. I was given a free reign, really, and I am, to this day, very grateful.

What about **SHADO's** base on the Moon?

Moonbase was a design that I came up with because I thought that a pre-fabricated, pressurised building built on the Moon would probably be spherical. It looked kind of interesting, too, and that was always important. Although we tried to be realistic we had to do things which were visually appealing so that is how I came up with that one. There were lots of cardboard kits that you could buy that were made up of pentagons and other geometric shapes and they were appealing visual images of that period and I guess I was influenced by that a little, too. It was a pain for the model makers because of the shapes but I think it worked.

What was the story behind your most famous **UFO** design, the *Mobile*?

It began with an idea I had for a sort of tank/truck used in **Joe 90**. There was a couple of them carrying explosives and *Joe 90* was driving one of them across country. [The Ken Turner helmed episode *Colonel McClaine*.] They were very low slung, originally, and very wide but David Lane, who was the producer of **Joe 90**, said that he really liked the look of them but couldn't see them being very easy to film once the miniature sets of the cabs were built because they were very wide and the puppets would have been too far apart to film. So I kept the basic design but reduced the size of the cabs. When I came to design the **UFO Mobiles** the scripts said that they were smallish and



tracked and I remembered the **Joe 90** design and sort of updated it. I knew that they were supposed to be kind of amphibious and able to drive over any type of terrain. I remember Derek had a metallic blue car at that time and it was a very light colour blue and it just seemed right for the colour of the *Mobiles*.

I understand that you were responsible for an un-used Interceptor design too.

That's right. It was another one that Derek was too busy to work on and I just asked if I could have a go. I'd already done the 'Hopper' which started out as a design from **Captain Scarlet**. In fact, Gerry was so keen on it that he wanted it exactly the same as the one in that. I was always sure that I could do a little better given the chance and so I re-worked the design and came up with the one seen in **UFO**. I wanted to make this particular craft, the 'Hopper' or *Moon-Mobile* as it was also known, look more realistic and I suppose a little like the real NASA things that we were then seeing and I wanted to make the *Interceptor* kind of follow that design too. You know, to make it look like an actual factory was constructing these things so there would be a uniform look to them. The big thing about the *Interceptor* is that it had a single missile. I remember an early script that I saw saying something like, "The *Interceptor* fires its missile and turns away". In the singular. I thought to myself that it would then have to be a pretty impressive missile if the *Interceptor* only carried one and the ideal place for it would be on the nose of a craft with a smallish cockpit and then a motor up the end and landing legs. Derek saw it and, on this occasion, didn't like it. He streamlined my design and made it a bit more futuristic but kept the legs and the single missile aspect of the design. Derek was the boss and that was that. There were no hard feelings. I had a little girder-work on it a bit like the *Eagles*

in **Space:1999** and I thought it looked all right but sometimes things don't work out.

Many of the models in UFO exhibit the use of 'kit-bashing'. Can you tell us a little about this?

We'd been doing that for some time, actually. I think it went back to the shows like **Fireball XL5** and Derek had made it very much the thing to do to brighten up a dull model or to enhance something that was already quite nice. I'd been doing things like that at home since I was a kid. I'd start off building a *Spitfire* kit or something and get a bit bored with it. I'd spray it silver and add some balsa wood wings and other kit parts to create a futuristic jet or something so it was not a new idea to me. I know now that many of these up and coming modellers like Mamas Pitsillis who I've been working with and people like David Sisson, who is very good, actually use these old kit parts as a basis for the scratch built models that they do. They pin point a bit of an engine we might have used or girder bridge work or something and it gives them the exact scale to work to. Some of the things that some of these young guys are doing are very good.

How do you look back upon your work on UFO?

Well I'm quite proud of some of it and actually I feel the same about the things I did on all of those shows. It is difficult to say that you like one more than another, like a parent in a way. I liked the 'Hopper', you know, the *Moon-Mobile*. The normal earth-based *Mobiles* were a bit of a favourite, I suppose. The thing with **UFO** was that, as a creative unit, we were at our height, there is no doubt about that. I'm not bragging at all but I really think that the designs, the models and the sequences themselves still stand up incredibly well to anything that is being done today. As it was a live action show we were giving it that little bit extra, I suppose,

because it was for adults as well as kids, because really the puppet things were kids' shows, however good they actually were.

Did your designs for the models need to be passed by Bob Bell as he was responsible for the full size sets?

I can't really remember. It was smoothed out by the time we did **UFO** but on the puppet shows when Bob would be doing the puppet-sized sets we did have a few exchanges. [Laughs.] There was plenty of swearing and door slamming when Derek or myself had come up with a design that had some awkward curves or panels. They were all right for us because we were working in a smaller scale but Bob would often shout and holler about it because he had to do exactly the same thing in a larger scale and it wasn't always easy. It was sometimes a race for who could design the thing first. If Bob designed and built a cockpit he would then present us with the idea and we would then have to incorporate what he had designed into our model but if I did it first he would have to build his sets to our specifications. Another aspect of **UFO** that diffused these problems was the fact that the camera angles on the guys in **SKY 1** or an *Interceptor* or whatever were very tight so not much set needed building anyway. We could have done some really outrageous stuff and it wouldn't have mattered too much because the cockpit interior was going to be little more than a seat, a joystick and a back panel with a few lights on it like the *Interceptors* had. It would have been nice to have been able to do some sections of, say, the *Mobiles*, in full scale and taken them out to Black Park and had actors jumping out of them. I'd wished we could have done that but scripts never included that type of thing. It could have looked very impressive even

continued on page 16...

Original **UFO** Mobile design.
© Mike Trim



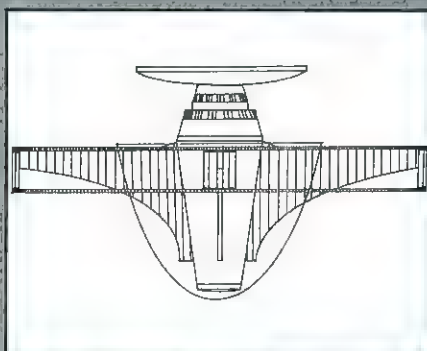
Rocket assembly building from **Doppelgänger**.
© Mike Trim





UFOs

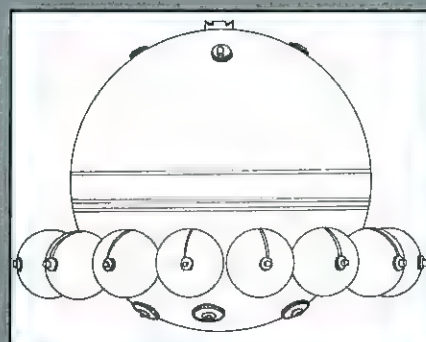
Derek Meddings wanted to imbue the *UFO* models that would feature so heavily in the series with a strange, unearthly quality. To achieve this a motor was housed in the body of the spacecraft, from which radiated a series of vanes culminating in 'paddles'. The body was topped by a transparent dome and a further transparent section was attached to the base of the craft. The body, with its vanes and paddles, could then be spun beneath the transparent dome of the *UFO*, which was attached to a flying rig by six wires, resulting in the whole spacecraft looking as though it was revolving. Highly reflective silver material was attached to the paddles and vanes to give a flashing, sparkling effect when the craft was 'in flight'. Unfortunately the *UFO*s could not be made to bank, as, if they were tilted, the crafts' delicate motors would catch against their bodies and the models would stop spinning. Fortunately this inability to deviate from the vertical only served to heighten the impression that the viewer was watching technology that had evolved on another world.

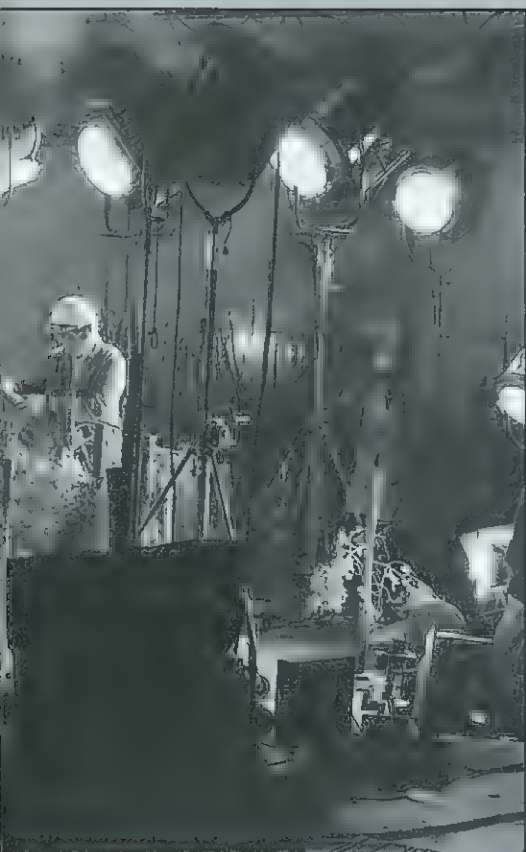


Exploding a myth

Many blueprints of the title craft from the series that have originated from various sources since the '70s depict the *UFO* as having an asymmetrical gap in its vane structure—ie: when viewing top and bottom plans there is a gap at a point on the circumference of the body that

spaces the vanes on either side of that gap further apart from each other than any of the other vanes are—giving the impression that a vane is missing. In fact, *that is exactly the case!* A Japanese kit of the *UFO* released in the early seventies has a vane missing and seems to be the originator of the misconception; the company's modellers obviously having worked from shots of a studio miniature (shots of this particular model can be found elsewhere in this magazine) which had had one of its vanes broken off. To set the record straight all gaps between the vanes on the original models were uniformly spaced around the body (as correctly depicted by **SF-FX** researcher Phil Rae in his blueprint of some years ago)—replica builders take note!





UFOs

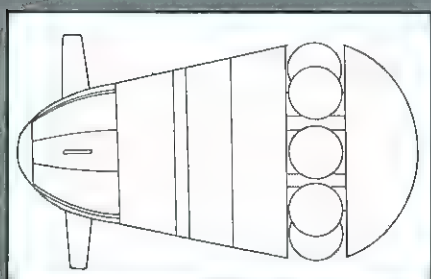
This spread: various behind-the-scenes shots showing the **UFO** miniatures being flown or crashed

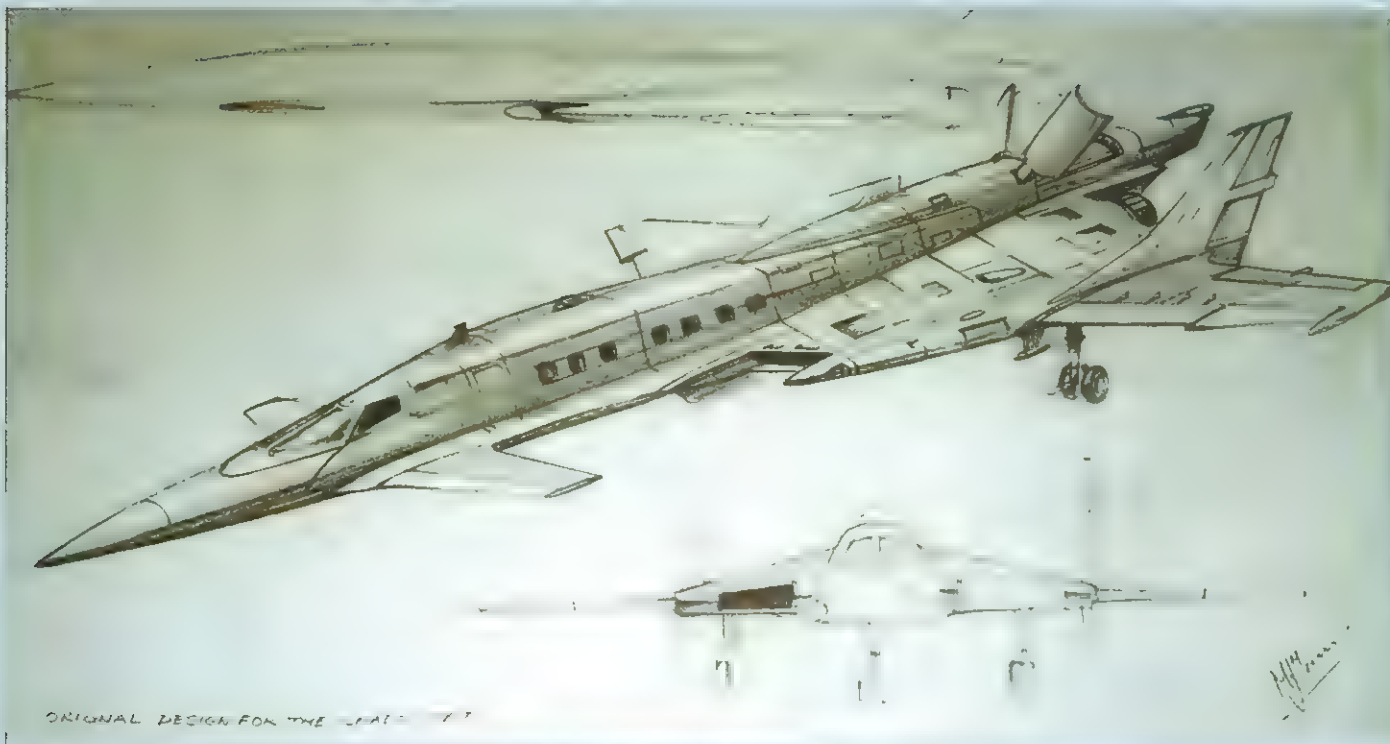
(Illustration [far left])—alien device used to sabotage *SHADO* lunar modules in *Conflict*

(Illustration [left])—alien *UFO* escape pod from the episode *A Question of Priorities*

(Illustration [below])—underwater *UFO* from *Reflections in the Water*

All illustrations © Angelo Finamore





...continued from page 12.

with just a small section of tracks and a door, for instance, but, like I said earlier, the designs were dictated by what was in the scripts.

UFO had a very 'uniform' look to it as it was about an organisation, SHADO. Did you liaise with other

crew members to ensure a continuity to the design of the show?

We had the problem on **UFO** of being stuck in Slough, while the actors and the rest of the team were at either **MGM** or **Pinewood**. You rarely saw anybody, actually. Both sides of the production,

live action and models, worked in a vacuum. We would see copies of things they were doing and vice-versa but we never worked together as we did on the puppet shows because then we were all under one roof. When the **Supermarionation** programmes ended we swallowed up what they had been



using and we were ready to go to town with all the space and, in many respects, we were happy to be on our own and allowed to get on with it. I must be honest and say that when we were sharing the buildings with the puppet crowd it was very much a 'them and us' situation. From those early days it was 'Christine's lot' and 'Derek's lot'. We were all lads sort of shouting and larking about with plenty of bad language like any group of blokes together I guess and sometimes we'd get complaints because we were only separated from the puppet stage by a dividing wall. We were blowing things up and hammering and sawing things and weren't really too worried about people's sensibilities. There was even a division in the effects unit with the crew and the workshop people. That's human nature, really. Once the puppet lot were gone it was great because we could shout and swear and blow things up and nobody gave a toss. It was great.

*How do you look back on **UFO** as a television programme?*

In all honesty as a programme I think it sometimes fell a little short of the mark. Things like **Scarlet** and **Joe** were for kids and so it didn't matter if a storyline or a piece of dialogue was a bit 'iffy' as it was for kids. With **UFO** we were all working hard to make it the best thing the company had ever done and sometimes I

did feel the acting was a bit corny or a plot-line was a bit daft. It's a funny one, really, because visually it is still a very impressive piece of television. I think I actually felt like that at the time, too, it isn't me just looking back on it. There is a following for those shows, particularly **UFO**, that is quite extraordinary. It's funny because I've just come back from a holiday in Italy and I went on a boat called **UFO** and I do know that Italy has a huge **UFO** following. Very strange.

How do you feel about the various model kits now available based on your designs?

Well, I'm very flattered. Some of them are excellent as I said people like **Mammas** and **David** are very good. I like the fact that something I've done is bringing pleasure and enjoyment to people after all these years and to have been involved in those programmes is something I'm very proud of. Whether it's a model kit or something built from scratch at home I'm pleased people still like them as designs.

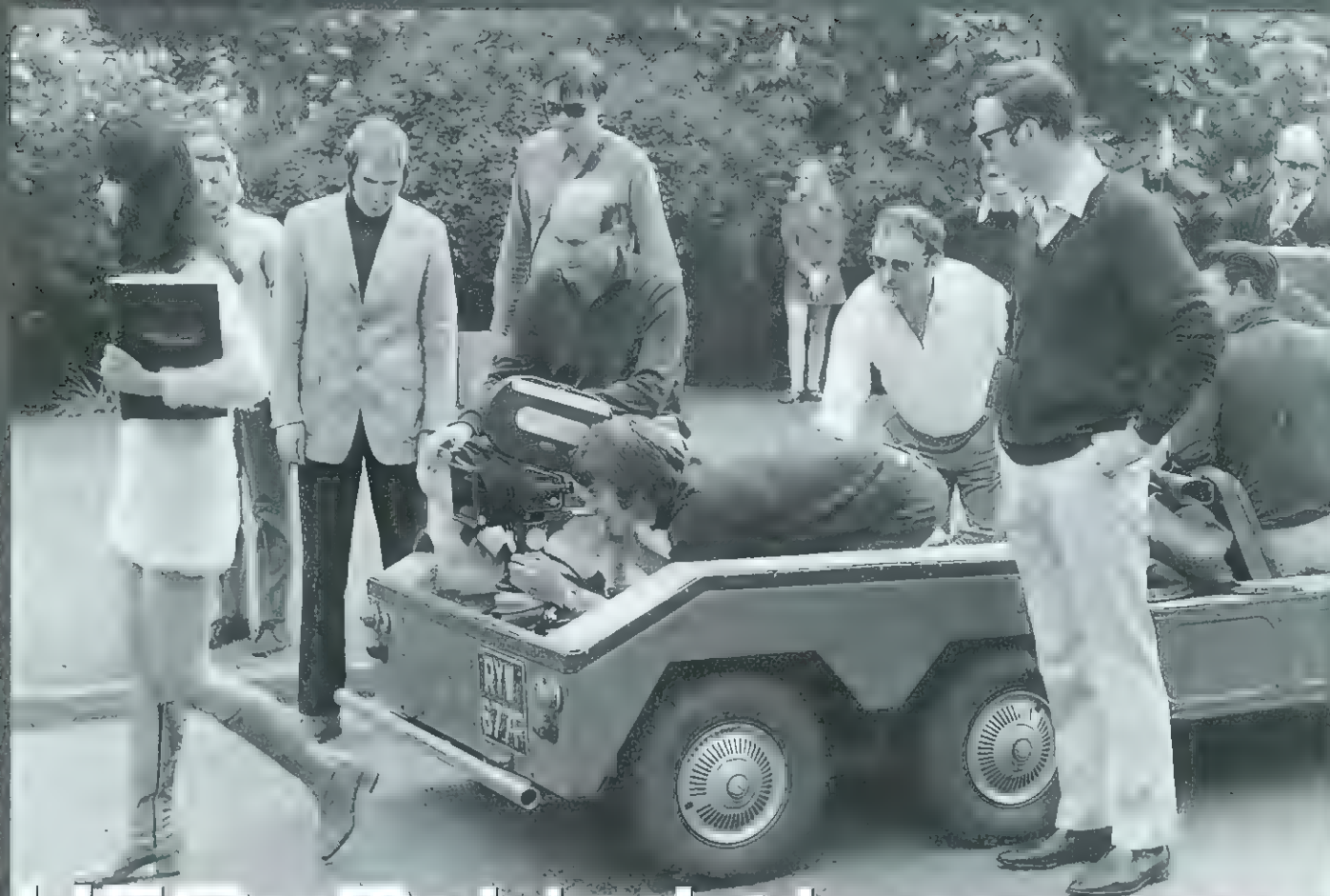
After many years out of the industry you are now 'in the thick of it' once more.

That's right. I'm here at **Bray** working on a project called **CABS**. I'm working with a guy called Sean Robinson and it's through Gerry Anderson's fan club, **Fanderson**, that I kind of met Sean,

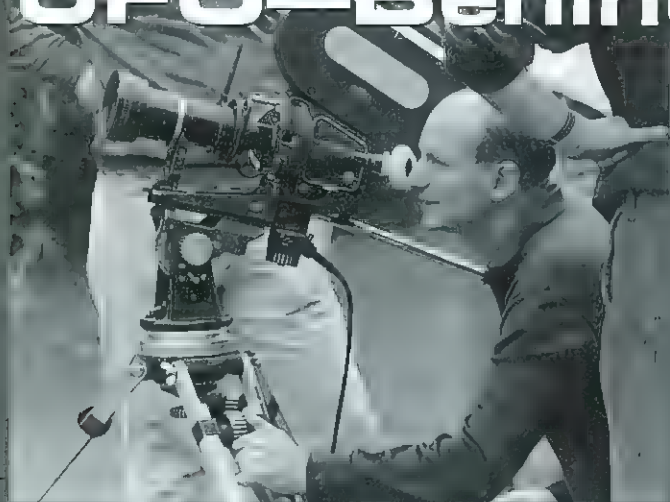
actually. I had done some interviews with a guy called Sam Mitchell who was working on the book about Derek Meddings. (The stunning *21st Century Visions*.) He told me about the club and asked if it was all right to give them my address. I agreed and soon after went along to one of their conventions. I met up with some of the old crowd including Alan Perry, who at that point was working with Sean on another project. Derek Meddings was involved too when sadly he passed away. Sean was devastated by Derek's death because he had become a close friend of his as well as hoping that he would do some designs for the project. Sean was talking to Alan and said that the only other person he would want to design the vehicles for the proposed project was me but had no idea of how to contact me. Alan said, "I met Mike again for the first time in years at a **Fanderson** thing a little while ago. Here's his number". For the last five years Sean and I have been working on different ideas and things are now looking pretty good. We've been to Cannes and had a big response from some potential backers from the 'States. We are looking, soon, to be 'all systems go!' as it were and I'm very excited. It feels like I'm coming home in a way because I'm doing what I began doing in those early days with Derek on **Thunderbirds**, **Captain Scarlet** and **The Mysterons** and **Joe 90**. Sitting at a drawing board and throwing ideas around with some mates until you achieve something you are happy with. I've been doing a bit of model making and some weathering and dirtying-down too so that's great. **CABS** is a totally original idea which will have a look and feel of its own but there will be kind of references to the old shows and I think fans of those things will be very interested in it. All the designs I've come up with are primarily driven by what is required from the script and if that looks good on screen then I'm happy. And if it makes a nice **Dinky Toy**, too, then I'm even happier. (Laughs uproariously.)

SF-FX thanks Mike Trim for his time and valued assistance with this piece. The writer also wishes to pass on his thanks to Sean Robinson for the time afforded to him during a very busy production period.

Martin Gainsford is a member of **FANDERSON—The Official Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society**. PO Box 12, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD10 0YE.



UFO—Behind the scenes

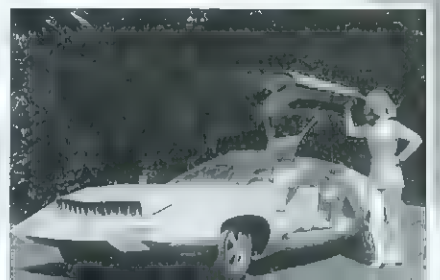
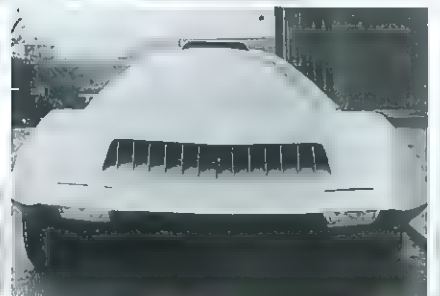




Opposite page: filming the opening credits walk up to the *Harlington-Straker* studio offices; Gerry Anderson behind the camera and directing Peter Gorden and Ed Bishop; Gerry directs George Sewell and the 'Seagull X-Ray' set.

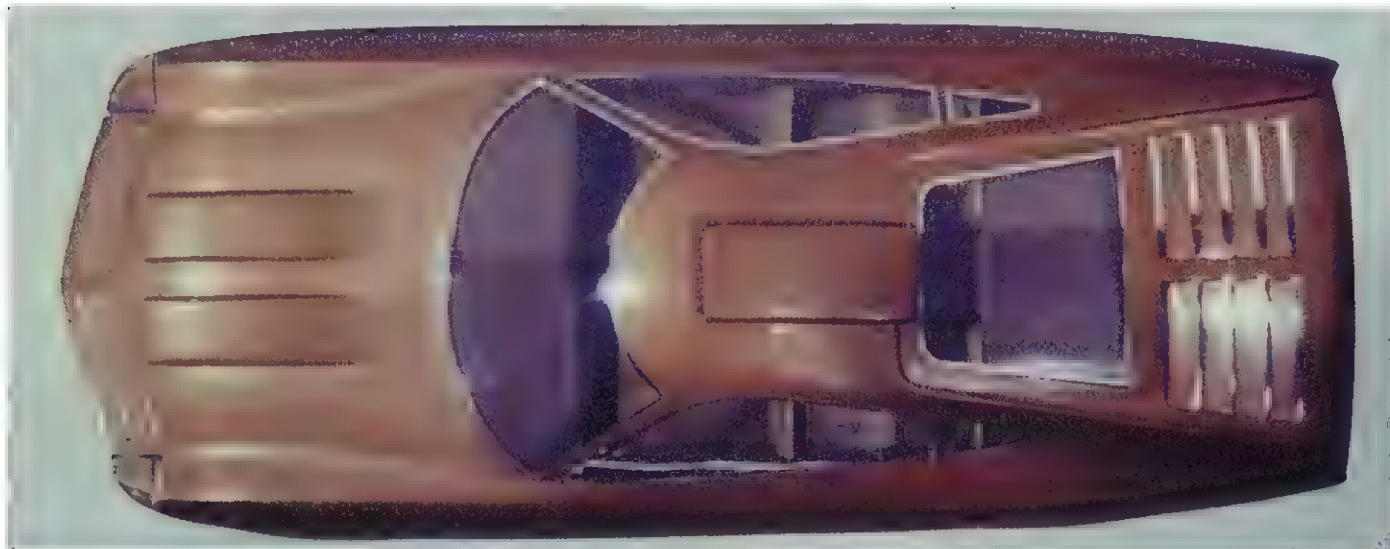
This page: full size versions of *Commander Straker* and *Colonel Foster's* cars; Wanda Ventham poses for publicity shots at the wheel of *Foster's* car in her *Moonbase* uniform.

Photos courtesy of Phil Rae.





The miniature of *Ed Straker's* car used in *Court Martial* and *Time Lash*.



Filming the *Rolls Royce* miniature crash following a *UFO* attack in the opening episode *Identified*.
Photos this spread courtesy of Phil Ree.





SHADAIR 'heavy transport jet'. This miniature was based on and modified from a jet model used in the Gerry Anderson feature film *Doppelganger*.

Filming the miniature rocket launch from *Close-Up*.



UFO Special—ISOSHADO

A look at the prop collection and convention activity of Italian UFO superfan Paolo Malaguti

My name is Paolo Malaguti. I'm a thirty nine year old Italian living near Milano in the north of the country. When **UFO** was aired for the first time in Italy in September 1971 I was a child, but I was always very impressed with this series. Even as a very young boy I collected anything and everything relating to the series - that first collecting 'phase' including *Dinky Toys*, *Panini* stickers, Italian versions of *Countdown* comics, etc.

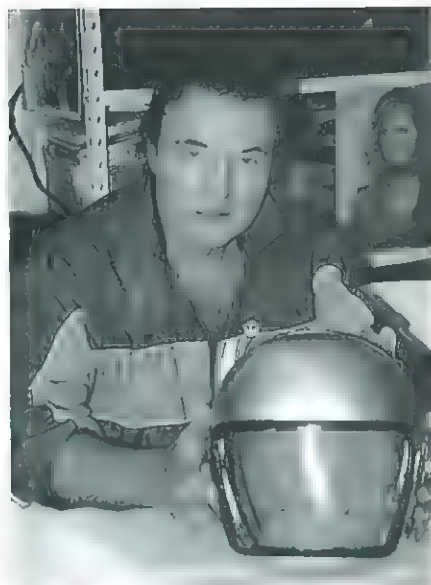
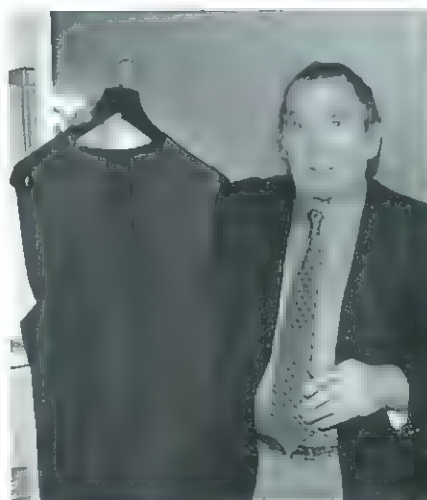
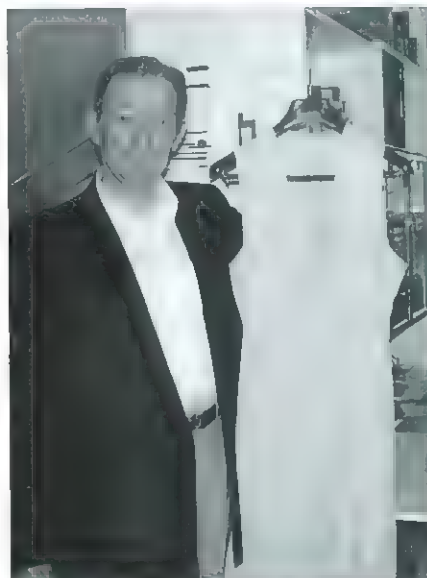
Some years later I began to collect items from all over the world, especially from England, Japan and the USA, and it was at this stage that I started to forge my own international links with many **UFO** fans across the globe.

In the early '90s I decided that my collectables were no longer giving me much satisfaction, so I switched my interest from merchandise to original studio items actually featured on the full size and miniature sets of **UFO**. Obviously, tracking down an original item is not exactly like tracking down a *Bandai* toy... First of all there is the question of rarity (apart from scripts, original items are always unique pieces) and, secondly, there's the question of being able to afford these items and the problems which sometimes occur in attempting to bring them to Italy.

I have to say that my phase of collecting original items coincided with the period in which I began to meet with some of the original cast, especially Ed Bishop. Following several meetings between us I decided to gather all the main Italian **UFO** fans together, organising our passion into a group called *ISOSHADO* (*Italian Section Of SHADO*). Our passion for the programme is very strong and our activities diverse - from planning meetings in Italy with **UFO** actors to finding and restoring original studio items; from increasing our personal merchandise collections to collaborating with anyone interested in **UFO** (magazines, television, books, etc.); from tracking down old kits whose parts were used in the '60s to detail the original *SHADO* vehicles to building perfect replicas of the models seen in the show.

As of this writing *ISOSHADO* has organised four meetings entitled *Project: Straker* (with Ed Bishop in 1988); *Project: Freeman* (with George Sewell in January, 1999); *Project: Alien* (with Gito Santana in July, 1999) and *Project: Foster* (with Mike Billington in May, 2000). Many other events are in the works.

One of the strongest factors that maintains my passion for **UFO** is my personal friendship with Ed Bishop, who I have had the occasion to meet many times in both England and Italy at **UFO** events and other events not always related to the series.



Top to bottom: Paolo Malaguti; Michael Billington (*Colonel Foster*) who wore this helmet in *Ordeal*; Ed Bishop with the original white suit worn by *Straker* in *Identified* (alterations were made for use in other TV productions); *Straker's* watch (owned by Ed Bishop); George Sewell with *Freeman's* green suit; Ed and Paolo in the jeep; ...and Michael takes the wheel. Opposite: Gito Santana (who played many of the aliens) and Paolo.

Catch up with *ISOSHADO* events and activities at: <http://digilander.iol.it/ISOSHADO>

UFO Special—SHADO jeeps

paolo malaguti

The largest original 'prop' in Paolo Malaguti's UFO collection is one of the three distinctive six-wheeled jeeps originally created for the feature film *Doppelganger*. Here Paolo details the jeep's subsequent alteration to a SHADO vehicle and some of its colourful history since filming stopped on the series...

The futuristic jeeps featured in *UFO* began life as that swinging sixties Austin Morris 'fun car' the *Mini Moke* - a small vehicle with a canvas/plastic removable roof, 850 cc petrol engine, two normal axles and just the standard four wheels (*Mokes* are also famous for their stripey appearances in that other cult TV classic *the Prisoner*). This basic vehicle was subsequently adapted by Derek Meddings and his FX team to become the futuristic jeep used by *EUROSEC*, the *European Space Exploration Council* organisation seen in the Gerry Anderson feature *Doppelganger*. As was the case with many of the props created for this movie, including costumes, spacesuits, weapons and even wigs, the jeeps would later be reused in *UFO*.

I know that *Century 21 Productions* commissioned long-time Anderson model makers *Space Models* of Feltham, UK, to produce three jeep vehicles based on Derek Meddings' sketches and projects working to a tight timescale of just three months. They therefore set about rapidly transforming three *Mini Mokes* from their standard configuration into the futuristic jeeps seen in *Doppelganger*. In the movie version we can clearly see two air vents at the front, the body colour is silver and there are two lateral lights and a

'lightning flash' on the roof. Excepting the large windscreens (moulded at a plastic fabricators in Tring, Hertfordshire, UK) the vehicles were totally open apart from some stowed plastic tents on the two sides. A supplementary axle (a spare *Mini* axle assembly literally bolted to the back-Ed.) was added to the rear to lengthen the jeeps and all four rear wheels had a braking system.

The main body shell of the vehicles was constructed from wood, fibreglass and plastic. The steering wheels, and, therefore, driving positions, were on the left hand side, as they were on all vehicles featured in *UFO* and *Doppelganger*. Gerry Anderson imagining a near-future England which had standardised its driving requirements with those of America and all other European countries.

Following *Doppelganger* two of the three jeeps were recycled for use in *UFO*. The main differences on the *UFO* versions are as follows: the body colour was now an azure blue instead of the former silver; the main screen was moved back by nineteen centimetres so that the front of the jeep appeared longer than it had in the feature film, and four wooden-framed gull-wing doors were also added to each vehicle. Whether the two rear doors were functional I cannot say, as only the front ones were seen operating in the series. I can tell you, however, that the rear doors were held in position by two thick, black elastic 'bands', which leads me to believe that they were non-operational.

The rear air vents and two lateral lights featured in *Doppelganger* were hidden by the addition of a fibreglass section and the 'lightning flash' was removed. Regarding the interior, as far as I'm aware there is no difference between the *EUROSEC* and *SHADO* jeeps apart from the steering wheels - those used in *UFO* were smaller since the repositioned screen didn't permit use of the larger wheels seen in the first version.

Further, when the jeeps were transformed into *SHADO* vehicles an additional section was built for the rear of the vehicle too, so if you compare the back section of the two versions you will note a considerable difference.

The longitudinal bar was shortened by nineteen centimetres since the windscreen had been moved back by that amount. In the late series episode *Timelash*, however, one of the jeeps was used without its bar and rear doors.

Post UFO History

The history of the jeep following the demise of *UFO* is not totally clear for me, although I do know that the vehicles were sold to private owners. I don't believe the first of the two jeeps (the one used by Ed Bishop and Wanda Ventham in *Timelash*) is still in existence, but I have yet to confirm this. The second vehicle (Turner's jeep) was sold at auction to a garage in Marsham, UK, and I suppose Mr. Crane (the owner) then utilised it as a rental car (presumably for fêtes and functions), since the jeep had a number of large *UFO* and *SHADO* logos stuck on its sides, together with the name of the garage. The shape of this vehicle at this stage was identical to that of the *SHADO* jeep, apart from the fact that the two rear doors had been removed and a chain had been added for the safety of the two rear passengers (this being necessary due to the missing rear doors).

After a number of years the jeep was sold by the garage to a motor museum in Keswick, UK, and it was here that I tracked down the vehicle.

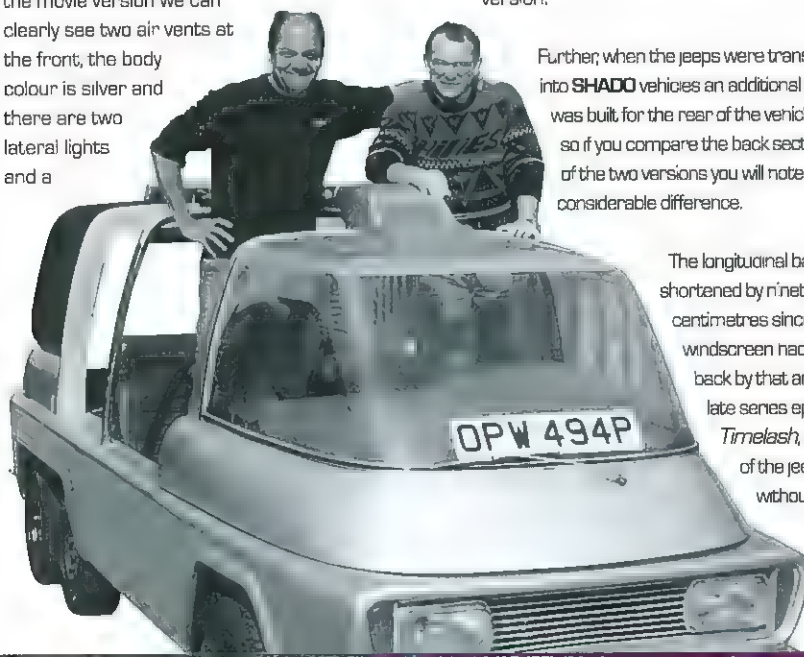
Peter Nelson of Keswick is the owner of *Cars of The Stars*, an automobile 'museum' comprised entirely of cars and vehicles utilised in films and television productions. The jeep was sold to him in very poor condition and he subsequently restored it to bring it back to a version very similar to the *Eurosec* jeep seen in *Doppelganger*. All the major parts added to convert it to the *SHADO* jeep were still on - or with - the vehicle, however.

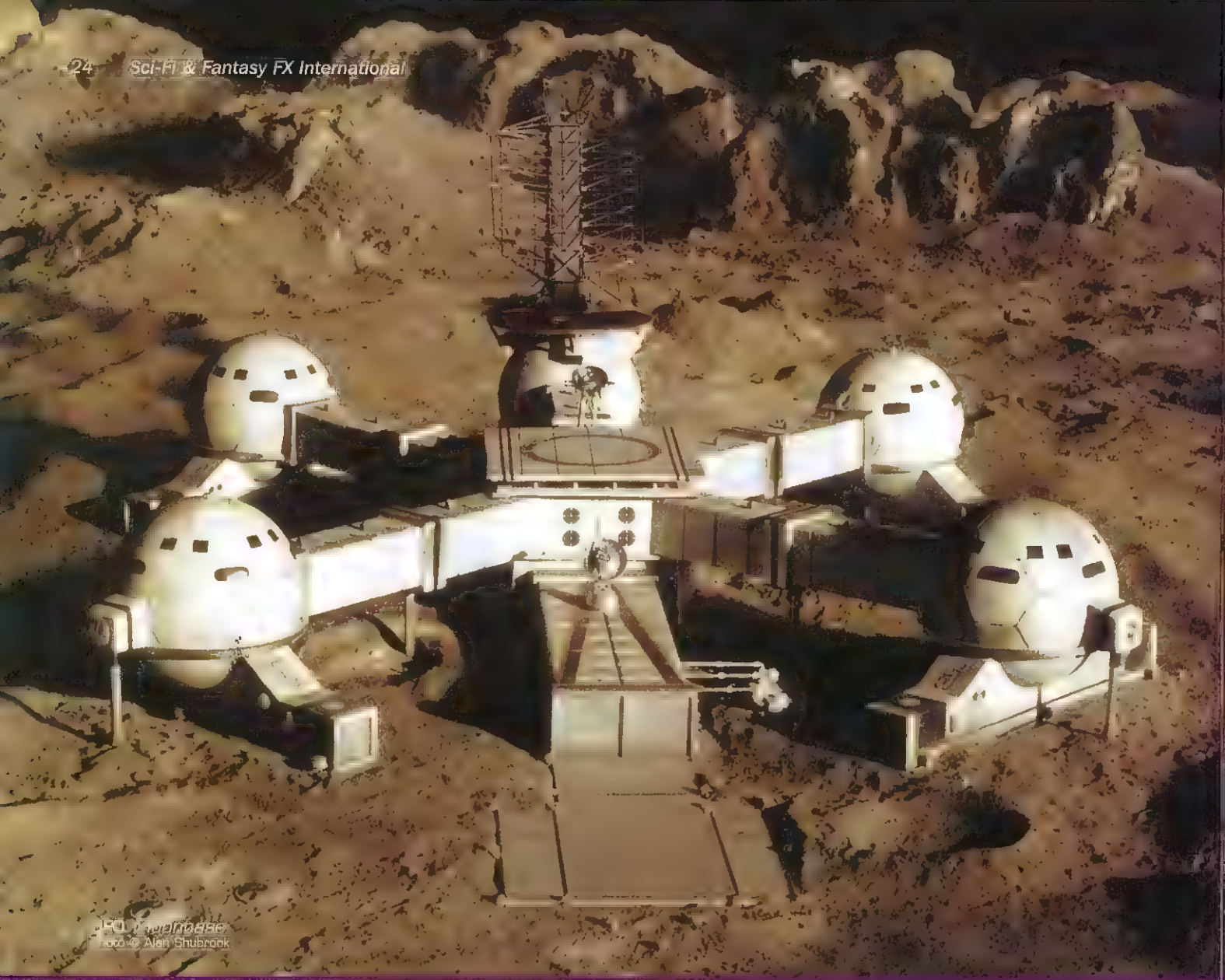
The only real 'error' he made during restoration was in moving the windscreen forward to its original position; and this is one of the big problems I will have to overcome when I begin transformation of the jeep back into *SHADO* mode.

Another considerable challenge will be the remaking of the two front doors in wood, but I suppose this will be possible since I have the two rear doors, even if these are in very poor condition, and these will be of great help when I begin building the other two. The present colour is silver, similar to but not exactly like the *Eurosec* shade. Luckily, however, I also have many parts of the jeep and doors in the original *SHADO* jeep blue, so reinstating the original colour won't be a problem.

The engine of the jeep still runs without any major problems, apart from needing some spares which I tracked down without any major difficulties and which are *exactly* like the original parts from thirty three years ago. Following restoration of the vehicle I hope to be able to drive it around the town in which I live in the not too distant future... *SHADO* rides again!

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UFO magazine
photo © Alan Shubrook

UFO special—

Inside Century 21

Series modelmaker Alan Shubrook's personal recollections of a magical time in his career

Interview by sam denham

When UFO entered production in 1969, Century 21 Productions' effects unit was one of the most productive and experienced in the world—largely thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of its crew. One of its youngest members was Alan Shubrook, who'd joined the company as a teenager only a few years earlier. As a modelmaker and effects assistant Alan was involved with almost every aspect of the effects production process, and in this recent interview with author Sam Denham he recalls the pleasures and pressures of working for Derek Meddings' team.

SD: I guess the first question is—How did you start with Century 21 and what was your background?

AS: Really, I'd always wanted to work in 'The film industry' since the first time I can remember seeing a flickering picture on a wall, but my family came very much from a banking background, so when I left school I automatically went to work in the city for a leading government stockbrokers. That was about age seventeen and in those days you were basically there for life. I had a

very, very secure type of job but it was totally frustrating. But one lunchtime I picked up an evening paper and saw a very small advertisement saying 'Scenic artist required by a film production company'—which of course was *Century 21*—so I rang them up. I had no experience, and though I thought I had some talent in that area, I'd no previous background whatsoever of working in the industry. I remember speaking to somebody and saying, "I'd like this job," and being given quite a lot of time on the phone, but being told quite politely that obviously without the experience, without any training, that thank you very much... But I didn't take that 'No' for an answer, and I rang up the next day and pushed my luck again. I think I called them three or four or five times, I was so keen to actually move in to something like this and ended up speaking to Bob Bell. Bob was a very nice chap and that was probably the opening because I think in the end he got so fed up with me ringing him up and him spending his time talking to me on the phone, and telling me what they were doing and so on, to get rid of me I think they actually said come over and see what it's all about, so that basically we can tell you once and for all, "You can't do this job can you? So please go away." It was really in desperation I think. "Right, O.K. come over, look at what you've got to do and then please don't ring us any more."

Now around that time I met the actress Hayley Mills (SD.), who lived with her parents in a beautiful Georgian house called the Wick on Richmond Hill, and I decided as a birthday present to make a model of the house for her. I'd just about completed it when I set off for this so-called interview at *Century 21*. I thought I'd better put a few things in the car that might help—illustrations, designs, and various things—and of course in the boot of the car I had this model of a Georgian house. I'll always remember being shown into reception at the studios—going in and seeing pictures of all the *Thunderbirds* round the reception area—and being taken through to

the special effects set as it was in those days. Bob Bell met me and took me round the basic studio on a conducted tour showing me storm skies and various things and obviously at this stage I realised I was well out of my depth—this was nothing I'd ever tackled before. I ended up going into an office—probably Mike Trim's office then, I suppose—and somebody must have said, "Is there anything else you can show us?" They were obviously thinking, "When do we get rid of this one?" So I brought in some illustrations and also this great cardboard box with this model inside. As soon as he saw it Bob Bell said, "Oooh, hang on a minute..." went out and came back about two or three minutes later with Mike Trim, who also looked at the model. Then he went away for five minutes and came back with Derek—although I didn't know at that stage who he was. He very briefly came in, had a look round the model and said, "When can you start?" I said, "As what?" and he said, "As modelmaker and special effects assistant." And that was it. I was offered a job there and then based on the model I'd taken in of the house I'd made for Hayley Mills. So I was in, and really in at the deep end, because although I'd gone in to something that I wanted to do, and knew I was capable of doing, of course I hadn't come from a background that gave me any standing in it.

SD: *It was kind of a back door into the business?*

AS: Yes, the unions were still quite strong and the problem was you couldn't get into the industry without being in the union and you couldn't get into the union without being in the industry. But there was a bit of a them against us situation at *Century 21*.

When I was first shown into the studio on the very first day I remember Ken Holt saying, "These are your clocking in cards and there are new clocking in machines all the way round the studio. And you clock in and you clock out." So I said, "Fine, O.K.," but as soon as I went over into the special effects studio and said, "Right, what do I do with the cards?" they just took them out of my hands and tore them up! There was quite a lot of that going on. Later on, after I moved from Essex—I used to travel every single day to the studios to start at whenever it was—half eight in the morning—and when we finished in the evenings I'd have to go all the way back, so after a while I got my own flat at Maidenhead—I used to basically enjoy working there so much that when it came to the end of filming I was quite happy to stay on and do other things that I wanted to do there, ready for the next day's filming. I remember one night I was making some trees. We'd had a lot of trees destroyed the day before with one of these fires that wipes them all out—sea moss goes up



David Palmer dirtying down the large *SkyDiver* model—matching to smaller scale version in foreground.
Photo © Alan Shubbrook



Crash sequence

from *UFO* episode *Flight Path*.

Petrol forecourt made by Alan Shubbrook.

1. Special Effects director Bill Camp makes a last minute inspection of the set before filming.
2. Crash! The car enters the shot, hits the petrol forecourt and bursts into flames.
3. The fire is extinguished to save as much of the set as possible for follow up shots.
4. The fire is reignited with a long, burning taper for safety before filming additional footage.
5. Explosions rip through the set with dramatic impact.
6. Almost nothing remains of a day's model making work and set construction.
7. Cut! All hands to the fire extinguishers.

Photos courtesy Alan Shubbrook.

very, very quickly—and I was working away in the workshop at nine, ten o'clock at night, quite happily and Nick Procopides, who was the union leader, came in and said, "Hello, I didn't know there was any overtime tonight." I said, "No, I'm just making some trees," and the next morning I was up in front of the committee for working when you're not being paid to work. This was really my first introduction to unions as they were then, and I got really reprimanded for working for nothing, basically, which did really hurt my pride a little bit.

SD: *How did your career with the company develop?*

AS: Well, I started with Brian Smithies in the dirtying down workshop, dressing and repairing models for the effects stages. By then we had three stages coming in with models that were falling off the wires to be being repaired and it was very high pressure work. I think we had stages five and six and the second unit with Peter Wragg. This was towards the end of the **Thunderbirds** series in '66. Of course, everything was still there for **Thunderbird Six** which was coming along and I worked all through **Thunderbird Six**. But it really was the tail end of **Thunderbirds**, and pre-preparation for **Captain Scarlet** was now the main thing on everybody's mind, although I didn't know what it was at that stage. I thought **Thunderbirds** was all we were producing. Eventually, after a time just working in the model dirtying down workshop area I was seconded on to the floor as special effects assistant, and ended up becoming a sort of general dogsbody for both. I'd still be in making models right up to the end with **UFO** but I still actually preferred being on the floor. But there was normally always something to be repaired or something to be dressed. We always had this situation where nobody really knew what a model was going to look like, or what it should look like. Although the drawings had been done and the storyboard was there it was still really down to the imagination of each person at various stages to come up with the end result, so there was a tremendous amount of your own imaginative input into things

and nobody ever really queried what you did. The fun bits were when you did a street scene, say, and you'd go through cutting bits out of newspapers and little tiny reduced pictures of record albums or whatever to put into display cases that were only supposed to be an inch or so high on a street corner. Most of the models would usually come in in their very sort of crude form from the main model workshop as a basic sprayed up shape, perhaps to me, and then you would get the job of completely dressing them. I suppose that probably 60% of the work I did was that type of thing, so a vehicle would come over, but it would literally almost be a block of carved wood, so you'd decide what panels, what numbers were going to go on the outside, what bit of chrome would go where, what sort of lights were going to go on it, and it was the same with buildings, really. But it was always interesting coming up with new ways to create an effect. For example, for something like a barbed wire fence where you needed a very, very fine mesh, we found a mesh that was encapsulated in a plastic that was used for some industrial process, and we'd actually buy this and then set fire to all the plastic so we could just get the mesh out of the middle of it. Once you'd discovered that, that was a new day. Great, we've found a new way of making a fence that looks more realistic than the mesh we had last week. And, of course, we could adapt models that had already been built. In the main area I was working in we had a mezzanine floor above us with all the models from all the series, so I mean a two minute walk up there and you'd actually walk through virtually everything from almost early **Four Feather Falls** right through to the current work you were doing. You'd actually get four or five vehicles parked up against one another on a shelf with almost like a **Thunderbird** vehicle next to a **Captain Scarlet** vehicle next to a **Joe 90** vehicle next to an **XL5** sort of vehicle or something. That would have been worth a photograph! And it was really a case of having to repair a lot of models as well. We were always there as something fell off the wires and someone would come running in

with the cameras waiting to go. So, generally, I saw a bit of everything, and worked on every single episode of **Captain Scarlet**, **Joe 90**, **UFO**, and obviously **Thunderbird Six** and the end of **Thunderbirds**. But I didn't go back for **Space:1999**, although I was asked to.

And, of course, before long I realised that not only did we have a great team, but that Derek was somebody who I admired very much and that he was building this kind of school. It was an unwritten kind of thing, but he was putting together people that obviously became the best special effects guys in the industry for many years to come. There was a lot of respect for everybody there I think. I mean everybody... although it was all wires and little bits of string and nobody really knew any one day what they were going to be doing... there was tremendous respect for Derek, and he always encouraged you. I mean, I hadn't been there long when he came into the modelshop looking around for somebody and said, "Alright Alan, you can come." "Where?" "We're going shopping." So off we went into Slough and did one of his famous shopping trips in one of the department stores. We just bought lampshades and weird cooking utensils and all sorts of things and took them back and they all became one of the **Captain Scarlet** **Mysterion** cities. Another famous time Derek said, "Alright we're going off on a longer trip," and put me in the car and we went over to the **Airfix** factory at Woolwich to look at all the kits that were in production. They were really proud of all these wonderful kits that they'd made that were on display, not realising what we wanted them for. All Derek was looking for was their lovely, intricate little cogs and wheels and things. He wasn't interested in the main bodies of the casting and, of course, yes, we'd buy hundreds and hundreds of these kits and take them all back, split them all open, pour them into these huge cardboard boxes into large bits, small bits, and they became the mainstay of the model shop.

SD: *How would you go about setting up a scene with an explosion, for example?*



is
Moonbase set before filming.
Photo © Arian Shubrook



Filming *Interceptor*
launch sequence.
Photo courtesy Phil Rae

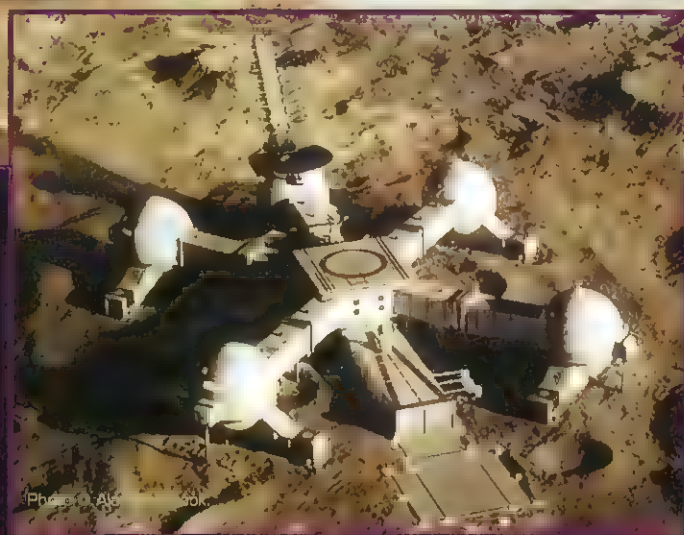


Photo © Arian Shubrook



Putting final touches to
Moonbase set before filming.

Photo © Arian Shubrook

David Palmer adds final dressing to *SkyDiver*.

Photo © Alan Shubbrook



AS: Well, say you had a vehicle coming along a road, crashing into a fence, and then rolling down an embankment and exploding, which was a typical sort of shot in any of the years' work from there. Firstly the vehicle would be controlled through a rod on the front suspension which actually went down through a slot in the road, and, surprisingly, was never really ever seen. It was really the crudest form of pulling a vehicle along. Just a simple rod that had a piece of wire on it. But, of course, that piece of wire then had to be long enough for somebody to be able to pull it the entire distance of the set which meant that they had to be running somewhere else, and it was always pretty funny that when you started pulling a vehicle along a road the person pulling it would have to start running down a corridor, normally past three or four offices, past the ladies and gents, past wardrobe at the bottom and at any one time somebody could come out of one of those doors and bump into them. The person couldn't actually see what they were doing either, they were just pulling a wire that was

pulling the rod that was pulling the vehicle along the road and it always still sticks in my mind that you didn't actually have anything more sophisticated than that. Once the vehicle had crashed, of course, nearly every time the camera would cut and then you'd go into an immediate second shot that was really the big explosion. The vehicle would then be detonated two or three times as it was supposed to be making the impact and again, if you were standing by as I often was you'd be thinking, "That's the lorry I made yesterday and they're letting it burn and that wasn't particularly a good shot." So everybody's standing around with the fire extinguishers and you're waiting for the director to shout out "Cut" so they can go in with the fire extinguishers, and now you're thinking, "I hope they cut soon because I know he's going to want to do it again and that vehicle's burning like mad and I'll now be working until ten o'clock at night," and of course that was often the case. You would literally have to just paint one side of it up again overnight. One side would still be charred black but you'd just paint the side that would be seen.

SD: How often would a shot go wrong?

AS: On a typical car crashing explosion type of shot, one in three would probably be done again. But you wouldn't really know until you'd seen the rushes. That was always very exciting—seeing rushes every day. It was quite a set routine, actually. You'd sort of get settled in in the morning and almost... I think we used to have *Radio Two* on a lot and Jimmy Young's programme used to start about ten in the morning... and almost on the count of starting the Jimmy Young programme's theme tune, the phone would ring and it was rushes and we'd go over to the theatre and view the previous day's work. And you'd sit there, although you'd probably worked through the night trying to get a model ready for another reshoot that day, hoping basically that the shot was going to be O.K. and often it was the case that although you had rebuilt something they'd accept the shot and not go ahead to refilm it. But it was frustrating that perhaps you'd sometimes spend four or five days on making something for the first shot, it would be destroyed to



Special effects model maker Alan Shubrook puts the finishing touches to a large-scale section of *Moonbase*. Courtesy Alan Shubrook

75% of its original construction, and you'd then have to remake it overnight very, very basically, very sort of makeshift for the shot to be done again the next day, and all the original work would never be seen, all the detail, because you hadn't got time to redo it. Derek would normally be in on most of the rushes and it was fairly easy to pick out what was going to work and what wasn't. And it's a great shame that a lot of those shots—rushes type shots—weren't saved—because they were real 'It'll be Alright on the Night' type shots. You were seeing it all in slow motion—the people running away from the actual vehicle, it blowing up, then them running back in to put out the fire or whatever. There were some hilarious scenes on rushes specially because they were shot at 120 frames per second. So everybody would be moving really, really slowly and the expression on somebody's face when you're slowing them down five times and they're running away from

perhaps a spaceship at eye height that's just about to explode is really quite funny. In the early days as well there wasn't a lot of precaution taken on safety. We all thought it was just part of a day's work to set fire to something and then blow it up. Later on there was a lot more care and attention taken and we were given goggles and helmets and things because I think the explosions got bigger and more dangerous, and a few accidents had happened. I remember we had one situation where one person was sacked by Derek on the spot from the special effects department. He'd only been there a little while and in his lunch hour, probably in an effort to learn a little bit about explosions, he took some explosives into the middle of a football pitch—we had these football pitches behind the studios—and dug a hole about a foot deep, covered it with bricks and earth, and then ran back and detonated it to see how big the bang would be. The only thing

was, he didn't realise was how big the bang would be! By that time we were already filming and the bricks came through the ceiling of the studio! He was obviously fired there and then. On the spot. Derek didn't take that very lightly whatsoever, but even then, I can't remember him ranting and raving, as somebody else might have. It was a case of, "Who did it? Right—you're out." Mind you there was one occasion when I went off with Derek to get some *Cortex* when it first came out and it wasn't until after we came back that somebody said *Cortex* could be detonated by radio waves and I'd had this huge chunk of it sitting on my lap. Nobody really realised how dangerous it was in those days. But it was a good thing the safety precautions were introduced because later on we nearly had a bad accident with a shot we had to do of a helicopter crashing into some pylons [For the Roger Moore film *Crossplot*—SD.] We had this

helicopter built, which had to explode, and we used to detonate the charge by running a current down the wires that were used to fly the models. It was all wired up and ready to go on set when the effects assistant setting it up touched the wires together while he was holding it. If he hadn't been wearing all the protective clothing he'd have been badly burned.

SD: Did you look at other films to set standards to aim for?

AS: Well, special effects were still fairly in their infancy in the sixties and even stop frame animation was pretty basic. People still saw models as models. I don't think they were taken that seriously in feature films but when anything did happen it was always drawn to everybody's attention. If somebody did see something in a film or if something was going to happen like a real space launch we'd all be told to watch it and try and remember what it looked like—which sounds crazy now in the days of video—but in those days you couldn't record anything and there wasn't a situation where you can go to the cinema three times a week now and see major special effects. Special effects were very very few and far between in films and it was only things like **2001** that stimulated the idea that special effects could be taken into a totally new league. But I think Derek was ready for that. He was ready for that challenge, definitely.

SD: What was the reaction to **2001**?

AS: Oh, I think we all thought it was fantastic, we really did. Because of the sort of pace we were working at and the sort of scale we were working at we'd used the same clouds over and over again on thousands of shots, really, and we knew that a spaceship was against the same cloud that *Thunderbird Two* had gone past and that *Joe 90*'s vehicle had gone past, so when you saw all that taken away and mattes and things being tried in a different way and a whole new set of techniques being used that we obviously didn't have in our studios for straightforward television productions, I think we all stood back

and said, "Wow! Give us the chance and we could have done that."

SD: Of course Kubrick originally wanted to headhunt Derek to work on the film.

AS: I can remember that. I can remember people coming into the studios in the early days and being shown round and then them following us and catching up with a group of us in a pub after work—in Maidenhead, I think. They sort of followed us in and we thought, "This is strange, we saw these people earlier," and the conversation went something like, "We need to recruit x number of people for two months' work in America..."—of course, two months became two years or whatever—and I was sort of all ears listening, "What's all this about?" People were saying, "Well, I'm contracted for this," and, "I can't get away because of that," and there was a lot of that sort of talk going along at that time. No idea, really, then what it was going to lead to, but that was the hunting that was going on then.

SD: For **2001**...

AS: Yeah. A couple of months' work in America! That's what it was going to be.

SD: And most of it was done over here.

AS: I think it was in the end. Actually, do you remember the shot in **UFO** when we pulled back to the planets,

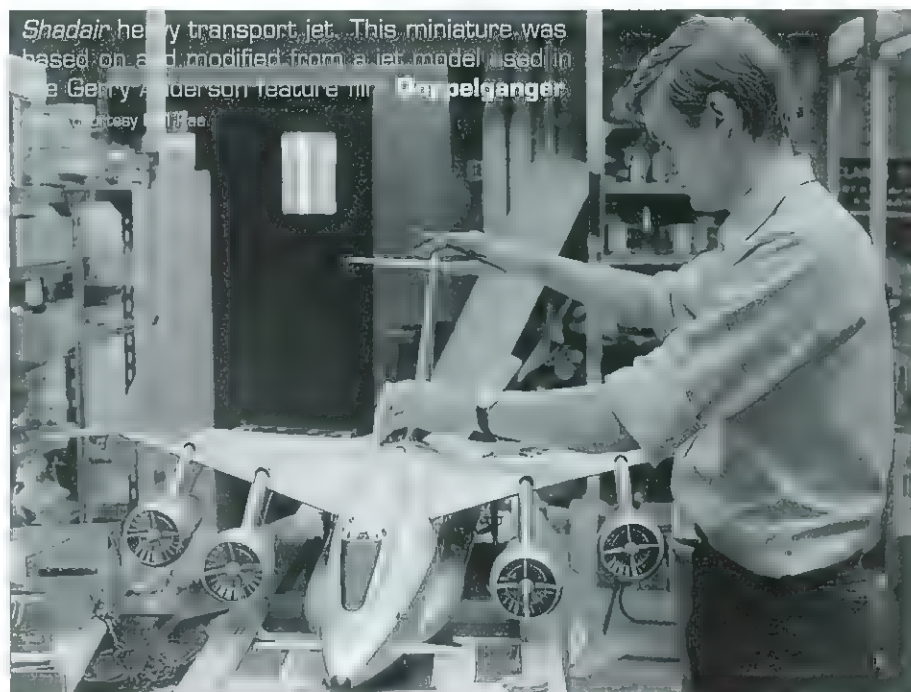
one planet and then another planet, that looked very impressive?

Obviously we were used to seeing the rushes without any sound at all, but I actually brought in music the day we saw it in rushes—nobody knew about it—the Stanley Kubrick music from **2001**. I had them put the sound on as the shot started pulling back and everybody sat there absolutely amazed. It sort of made the shot.

SD: Were you surprised when the company moved into live action?

AS: Yes—because I always felt it was a mistake. It's a bit like saying, great, *Micky Mouse* works as a cartoon, now let's do *Micky Mouse* as live action, but I'd say no, *Micky Mouse* only works because it's a cartoon. So I never saw the need to go to live action. I thought what we were producing was ideal for what we were selling. **Thunderbirds** as a children's series was probably the most successful children's series ever produced. It appealed to children and adults alike. People were glued to the television sets four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon for an hour's viewing that captured the imagination in a way that I don't think actors would have done, or would do today. So I didn't see the need to go over to actors. But what it did do, I noticed dramatically, was cut down the number of special effects shots.

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Putting last minute touches to Gabrielle Drake's make-up prior to filming on the *Moonbase* set.

Photo courtesy Phil Rae



George Cole is suited up for a dangerous mission on the Moon's surface in the episode *Flight Path*.

Photo courtesy Phil Rae

This shot, and inset:
Filming on the *Moonbase* set.

Photo courtesy Phil Rae.



Moonbase 3
Photo courtesy Phil Rae.

The *SHADAIR Seagull X-Ray* passenger jet miniature seen in the pilot episode *Identified* and also featured in later episodes as stock footage.

Photo courtesy Phil Rea.



...continued from page 32.

Probably because live action allows a lot more time to be taken up with conversation and the interplay between actors, less effort was put into the script in creating special effects scenes. So we seemed to have a lot less work on the special effects side once we went over to live action. I know one or two people said everybody yearned for the day when the puppets finally had their strings cut and actors took over, but that to me was never a problem, and certainly lots of the lads I worked with were quite happy being associated with a children's television puppet series. But really, I suppose—I didn't know Gerry that well—but from what I heard, I think he just saw it as an end to get into live action.

SD: Did you see much of Gerry and Sylvia in the studios?

AS: I suppose when I first went there I expected Gerry Anderson to be looking over your shoulder every two seconds. I was horrified when I realised I'd been there something like two or three months and I hadn't even seen or heard of Gerry Anderson. Then I imagined him to be locked away in one of his rooms with his head down, but people said, "Oh no, you don't see Gerry Anderson, he's never here." and in all the years I was there I'd say half a dozen times you saw the Rolls-Royces pull up for the odd press call if we had a new series coming out and the national press wanted some pictures, but he never seemed to be there at all really. Creative input from

Gerry, actually in the studios, all the time I worked there, through *Captain Scarlet* to the end of *UFO* was zero, really. Whether he had more input in post and pre-production is another matter, but he was never there in terms of what physically went onto the celluloid. It was very, very much down to the hands on team, and that did surprise me.

SD: How about Sylvia?

AS: I can't really remember seeing Sylvia more than about twice in four years or so. Never there at all.

SD: Did the atmosphere at the studios change when the puppet unit closed?

AS: Yes, it did. It became a little bit more of a ghost city, really. It wasn't quite the same I didn't think. It was the beginning of the end, though I must admit the special effects on *UFO* became more realistic than ever, perhaps because we had more time. There wasn't the pressure. Perhaps we were able to put far more attention to detail and get back a little bit of enthusiasm into what we were doing.

SD: And now that you were working with live action did you find you had to improve the effects because you were having to compete with the real world?

AS: I think so. I think the car that swung round the corner at the wrong speed that bumped up and down the pavement in a puppet series was quite acceptable but put that into a live action series and

everybody would fall off their seats laughing. So I think yes, we tried to now say, "Look what we can do." I think perhaps because it may have been that the writing was on the wall a little bit and we were actually trying to show that we could actually produce special effects in a way that was almost competing with the big studios. We'd now filmed things like *Doppelganger* which we'd filmed outdoors. We built the set outside, and did the rocket launch and everything outdoors, and actually tried to do it in a totally different way to anything that had ever been done indoors. It was a totally different sort of experience filming a rocket launching outdoors as opposed to having all the fans and extractors and everything to control the problems of smoke and flames. So we were moving in that direction. But we had lots of new problems. You could see all the time that Derek was saying, "Well, I think this is going to work, but if somebody suggests something else we'll give it a go," and I think that's what we all admired, really. You didn't have to stand back and be frightened of saying something. You could happily say to Derek "Let's put a couple of fans over there and see if that'll help because the wind's come up from the other direction now," and he'd say, "Yeah, O.K. let's do that." You could talk to the man. It was quite nice. I think a lot of people in the industry you can't talk to or will always pretend to know better. I admired him tremendously. But he was somebody who just could look at

you and you could tell that you weren't pleasing him, but that you could if your heart was in it and you got on and did the job properly again. He didn't shout and he didn't raise his voice that much—although obviously he did when things went really wrong.

SD: *You came to the end of UFO... How did it stop?*

AS: I think when it got to the point that it sunk in that the studios were not only being closed down but they were being almost gutted it was something that hurt I think everybody there. It was a case of we're bringing in outside people to clear everything out, to break it all up and throw it all away. We thought what we've got here—we're building pieces of equipment that have never been used before, we had things that weren't being respected at all—and the day I remember walking out of the studio and seeing the actual skips in the front loaded with all the broken up sets from the special effects department, and props and things, and cockpits of *Angel* aircraft, I thought this is not just three or four or five years of your life gone, on a skip, but it's that somebody isn't realising what they're doing. They're actually not in control of what's going on here, but there's nothing you can do to stop it and there were a lot of us who thought that way. There were the handful that were quite happy just to go on to the next job, but the majority of us got that lump in our throats and we just really were quite shattered. I think that's really what hurt most. I thought if this is how the industry can treat something so unique, then what future is there, really? It was a very, very emotional time. Very, very emotional. I remember walking round some of the skips at the back, not just seeing the stuff smashed up, but seeing the way that it was just being totally disregarded. Now we know that museums and collectors would have given their right arms for most of it. It was the end of an era that came twenty years too early, really. We knew it but nobody would listen and that was a great, great shame, and I was very disillusioned because I

really believed in what we were doing. I loved it and would have worked there for nothing, basically. So I came back over to this side of London and gave up my flat in Maidenhead. I then answered an advertisement from a group of newspapers being set up by Rupert Murdoch. His nephew had come over from Australia and wanted an assistant. I replied to this ad just for something to do, went along and saw this chap and was asked if I would be his right hand man setting up a chain of newspapers around London as a designer and layout artist. I thought, "Oh well, I've nothing to lose." I took the job and within a week Ken Holt rang me and said, "Are you coming to *Pinewood*? We're doing *Space:1999*." It was only for three or four weeks work, tests, and I thought, "Oh." Deep down of course, yes, this is what I wanted to do, but this is a new venture and if the film industry is going down the pan, what do I do? So I actually said no to him, which is probably the worst decision I ever made because it was something I always wanted to stay with and I would probably have gone the route that a lot of the others had gone. So that was basically the end at that point.

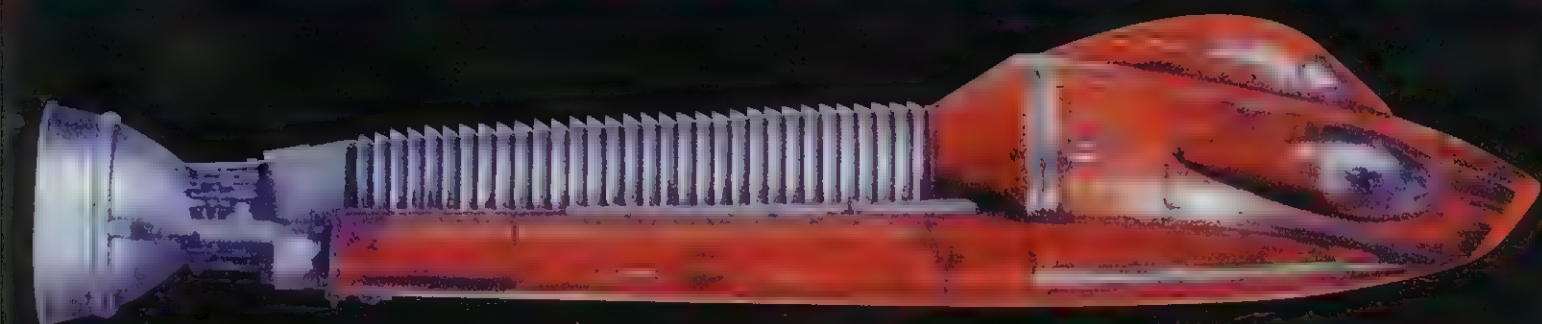
SD: *If the studios had stayed open, do you think Derek would still have moved on to make big budget movies?*

AS: I think so. I think the day to day vehicle left to right had been done so many times, I mean hundreds of times, basically, that the idea of trying to emulate a real space flight became more exciting. To say "There you are. Was that the real thing or not?" And this was obviously long before the days of digital effects or anything like that. It was far more of an achievement to try to create the real thing on a piece of concrete in Slough. So I think, yes, he was looking for that new challenge which obviously with *Superman* and things like that he found. To try and make the impossible look real. I think he was looking for new areas of a challenge and I think they were the sort of films that stimulated the idea that special effects could be taken into a totally new league and Derek was ready for that challenge, definitely. It wasn't whether he wanted to—you knew he had to. You could see it in his eyes that he was looking for something a little bit special. He was striving for something out there that he wasn't being given perhaps the time and equipment to do at *Century 21*. You could see it in his eyes that he'd say OK, but that could be done a lot, lot better, and the *Superman* and *Bond* films gave him the opportunity to actually achieve those higher standards.



The larger *Lunar Module* miniature.

Photo courtesy Phil Rae.



This page: Moonmobile, Lunar Carrier and Lunar Module miniatures. Photos courtesy Phil Rae.

Jackson's Jet

UFO Special



This is one of the few original studio models still existing from **UFO**. Jackson's jet appeared for the most part in the episode *Exposed* (which introduces the character of *Paul Foster* to the cast) but can also be seen in stock footage in at least one other

episode. The model may not be as popular as the *Mobiles* or *Interceptors* but I'm very fond of it. Quality of finish and detailing are superb, and this model, being almost completely made from balsa wood, was probably far more difficult to make than some of the fibreglass miniatures featured in the show.

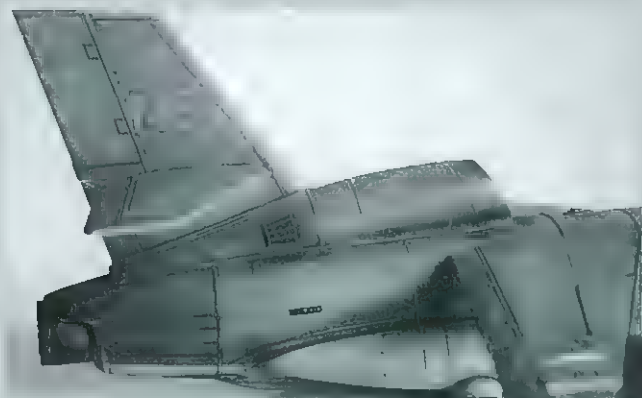
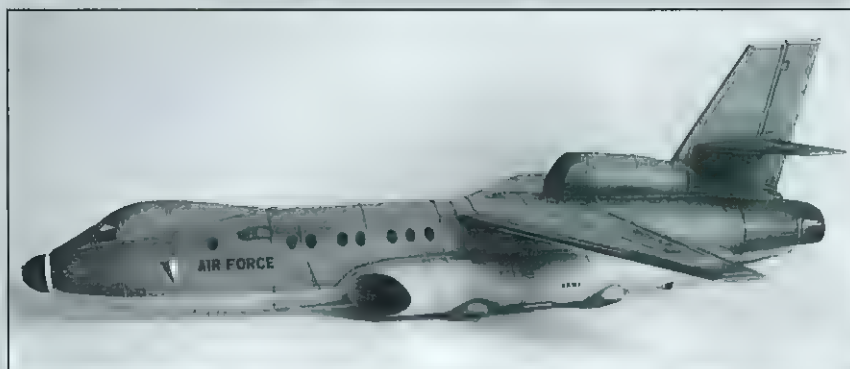
The body and wings are formed from laminated pieces of balsa which are now, unfortunately, showing some signs of ageing in the form of surface cracks. Plastic pieces on the model are kit bits, many of which turn up on other **UFO** studio models. Easily recognisable are parts from the *Airfix B29*

Superfortress, *Atlas Booster* and *Mercury Capsule* (from the *Everything is Go!* kit, plus 1/48 scale *Mercury capsule* and *Airfix SRN hovercraft* bits). The decals come from the same kits, excepting the triangular pennants and red striping. There are no pilots in the cockpit and, on the nose, tail and wings, the small nails used to fix the suspension wires are still present. At the rear is a large, metallic propeller exhaust, probably used in conjunction with the mechanism which produced smoke during take-off and flying shots.

Dimensions in centimetres are as follows:

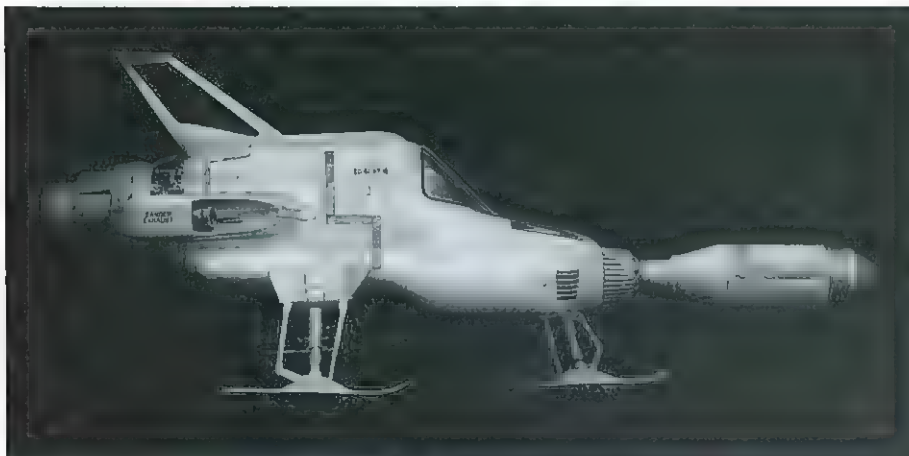
Wingspan: 44.3 | Length: 63.5 | Height: 20.4

Weight: 570g.



Shots © Paolo Malaguti.

UFO special—Moonbase Interceptor Miniatures factfile



- Two sizes of *Interceptor* were built. The largest (around 26" long) was used in close-up work and whenever an *Interceptor* was seen in the foreground of a shot. The smaller version (around 13" long) was used in long shots and behind the larger scale miniature to create an illusion of depth.

- The contours of each scale are significantly different but, as the smaller version was never seen in close-up, this was hardly noticeable on screen.

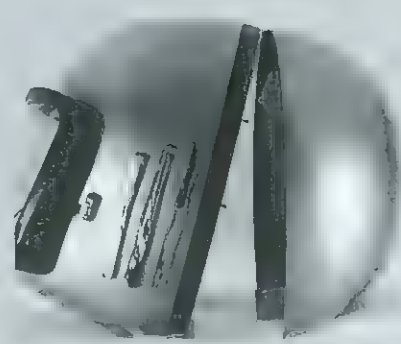
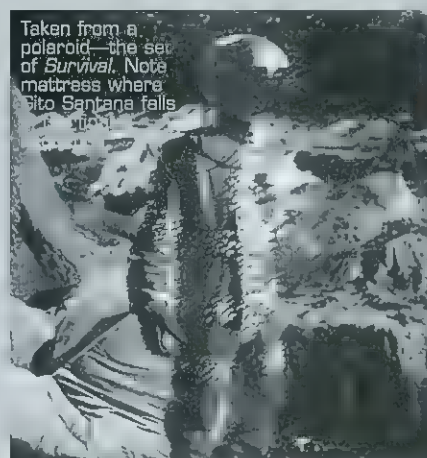
paolo malaguti

Alien Helmet



This is one of two original alien helmet props worn by the actors who played the otherworldly occupants of the *UFOs* in the series. The other, which, judging by photographs I've seen of it, was a little better finished than mine, was unfortunately destroyed—how and why I don't know. The helmets were hand made and, as such, had slightly different profiles. The original intended shape of the **UFO** helmet, as seen in the pilot *Identified* plus episodes such as *The Computer Affair*, *The Cat With Ten Lives* and *Survival*, featured a flat, fixed visor. This version (as **UFO** 'alien' actor Gito Santana informed me) was extremely uncomfortable to wear and was placed on the actors' heads just a few seconds before filming began on each shot. The actors could not breathe inside the props and their breath quickly caused filming problems by misting the transparent visors. Following the production of a few episodes it was decided that some changes would be made to the helmets, probably to ensure that the actors playing the aliens remained alive

on set! An opening visor was therefore added to the basic shape, this being mounted on a large black frame and operating courtesy of two hinges on the right hand side and a small button on the left. Since the basic contours of the helmet did not match those of the new visor the area of fibreglass all around the visor was enlarged, making the overall shape a little rounder. In fact, the profiles of the two versions of alien helmet are notably different. One



of the two new 'framed' visors incorporated a 'double glass' pocket which could be filled with green liquid (*Ordeal*).

On my helmet fibreglass added after the prop's original creation can clearly be seen inside all around the frame area (especially around the chin), dispelling the theory that four alien helmets were created for the series. There were only two, subsequently converted with the addition of the new visors. The 'MK II' helmets can be seen in *Ordeal*, *Mindbender*, *The Square Triangle* and *The Long Sleep*.

Generally speaking, the materials used to make the helmets were as follows: fibreglass for the main body, glass for the visor transparencies, wood for the six black strips (three on each side to hide a series of small breathing holes which ultimately proved ineffectual), foam and plastic for protection of the wearer's head inside the prop, steel for the central black strip (used to hide the joins of the two halves of the helmet) and brass for the small screws used to fix this strip in place and also for the visor hinges.

- The bodies of each version were created in the same way. From a wooden master a mould was created and the bodies were then laid up in fibreglass.

- Legs, skids, top fin and cannon are brass.

- The *Interceptors*' wings were made from wood.

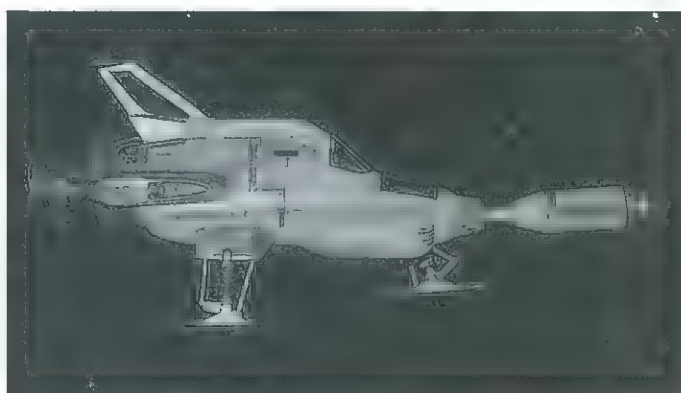
- The cockpits were sparsely detailed.

- Markings were a combination of *Testors (Italeri) Kaman Husky* helicopter kit and *Revell Armoured Vehicle and Scissors* bridge kit decals and *Letraset* dry-transfer lettering. Striping was created with tape.

- The larger *Interceptor* featured a rubber seal around its cockpit canopy. Studio access to the interior was via a removable panel on the underside.

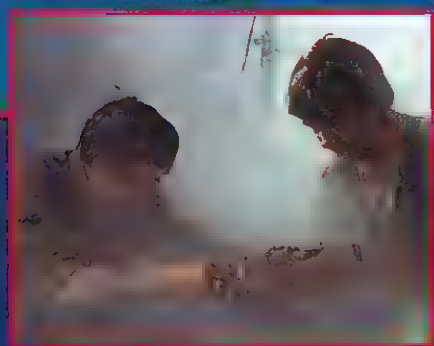
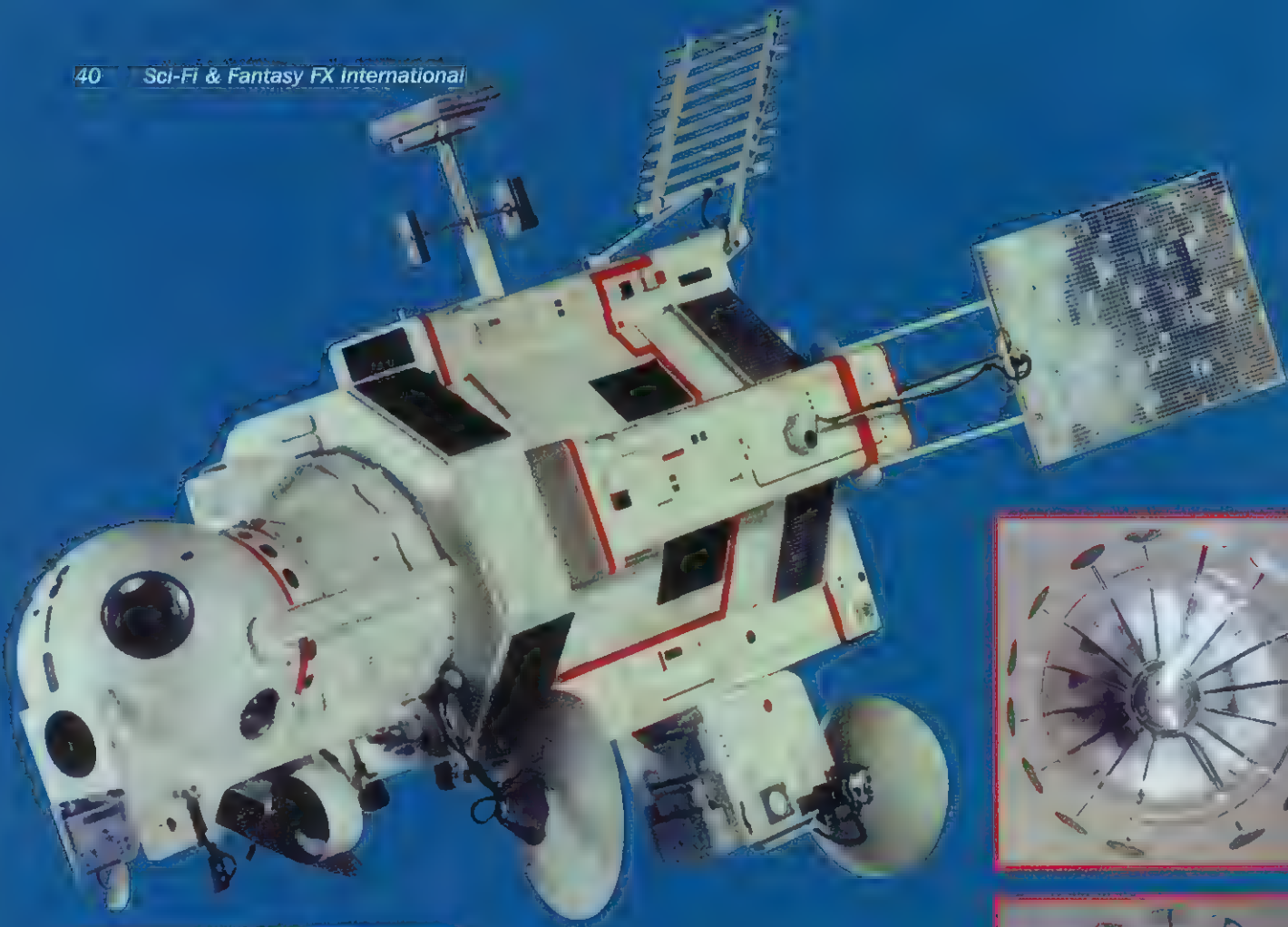
- The models were suspended by fine wires and run along an overhead track or hand held to simulate flight.

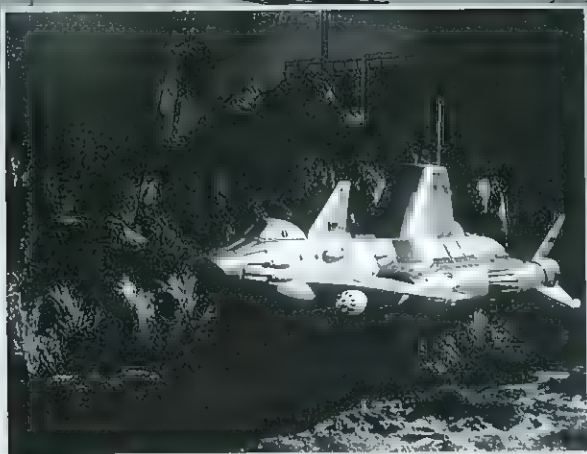
- Each model had an aluminium tube built into its underside into which was placed slow burning pyrotechnic charges.



- A bulb was built into a tube inserted into the rear engine of the small version to simulate engine glow. This is rarely seen on screen.

Compiled with thanks to Phil Rae.
Interceptor shots courtesy of Phil Rae.





Top: filming the launch of *Sky 1*.
 Top inset: 'dry' filming of large *SkyDiver* miniature.
 Above inset: researcher Phil Rae with the large *Sky 1* model.
 Opposite page top: *Space Intruder Detector* (SID) miniature.
 Opposite: close-up of a *UFO* miniature.
 Opposite inset: preparing a *UFO* for filming and top and bottom views of the famous *UFO* with vane missing. Shots courtesy Phil Rae.

Next time, in Sci-fi & Fantasy FX...

Encounter Lost Souls...

A report on creating visual FX for supernatural comedy *Our Souls to Keep*.



Discover More Aliens Facts...

Courtesy of Robert Skotak, we present an exclusive appendix to our *Aliens Specials* and the Skotak Brothers' FX work for *Aliens*, revealing more rare facts and photographs.

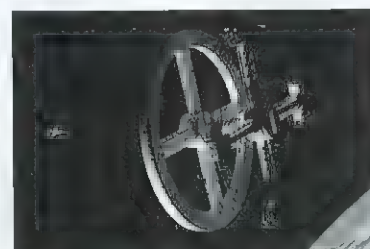
And visit Space Stations on the final frontier...

Visit *Regula One* and *Space Station One*, with our talented scratchbuild modellers as your guides.

Plus:

FX stories, Director's Cut, kit reviews, news and much more...

Issue 54 of *SF-FX* is on sale February 2—don't miss it!



Interceptors—Immediate Launch

Special Project: the making of ENA's UFO Moonbase Interceptor kit

Part five—final construction, painting and decals

mike reccia

Last issue we left our almost completed Moonbase Interceptor with just the canopy and top fin requiring assembly before final painting and weathering could take place. OK—and in a rather appropriate issue—let's work those remaining parts, modellers, and get this baby ready for lunar duty...

The canopy is supplied as a clear, unblemished vacform part which needs to be cut away from its surrounding plastic. Before you do this, however, and as recommended in the instructions, you first need to cover the canopy area on both sides of the part with strips of masking tape. This will prevent the piece from being scratched as you cut the canopy out and shape its edges. Using a scalpel blade I gently scribed around the part several times until the transparency could be carefully snapped away from its backing. Go easy here as too much pressure whilst cutting will cause your blade to skew off its path and gouge the surrounding plastic. Having cut out the canopy it was then a matter of repeatedly test fitting the part against the opening in the *Interceptor* body and slicing off small pieces of plastic from the edges until I had an adequate match with the cockpit area on the craft. I say adequate because the canopy doesn't fit very well. It's too wide and a couple of hours spent trimming it back and trying to make it fit as neatly as possible still left sizeable gaps between craft and canopy at the bottom edges on both sides. Had I hacked any more plastic away I would have lost height too, resulting in the canopy not matching the opening at the back edge either. I glued the part in place using two-part epoxy (which does not fog transparent parts) sparingly and holding it in position until set with strips of

masking tape (see photograph). I would tackle the gaps later, and at this stage just added a central strip of *thin plasticard* (so it would be flexible

enough to follow the canopy contours) to represent the central spar.

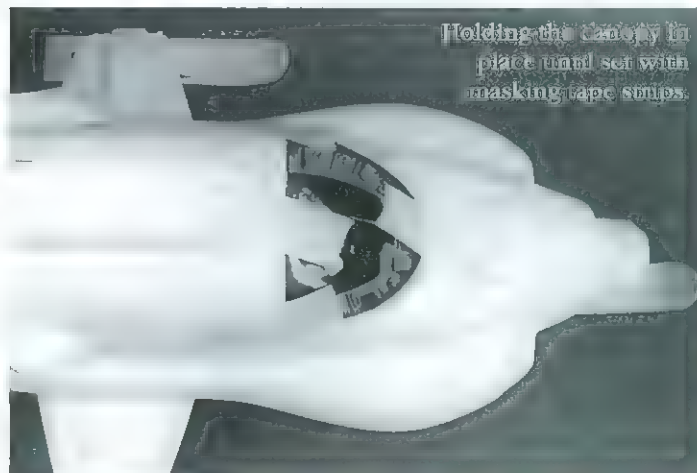
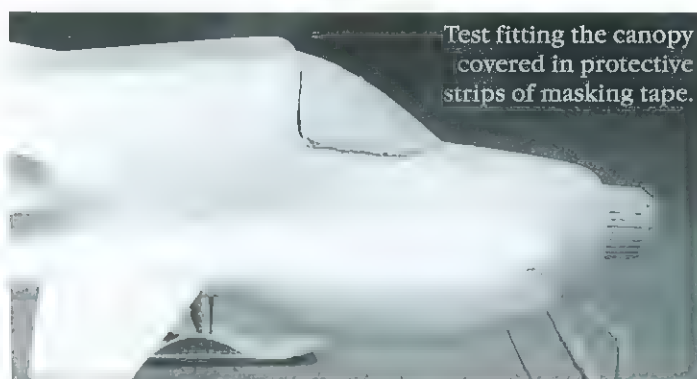
Whilst tackling other aspects of the kit I found myself repeatedly glancing at the *Interceptor* in profile and feeling that something wasn't quite right. Checking with shots of the studio miniatures I finally pinned down that 'something' to the profile shape of the canopy. On the model

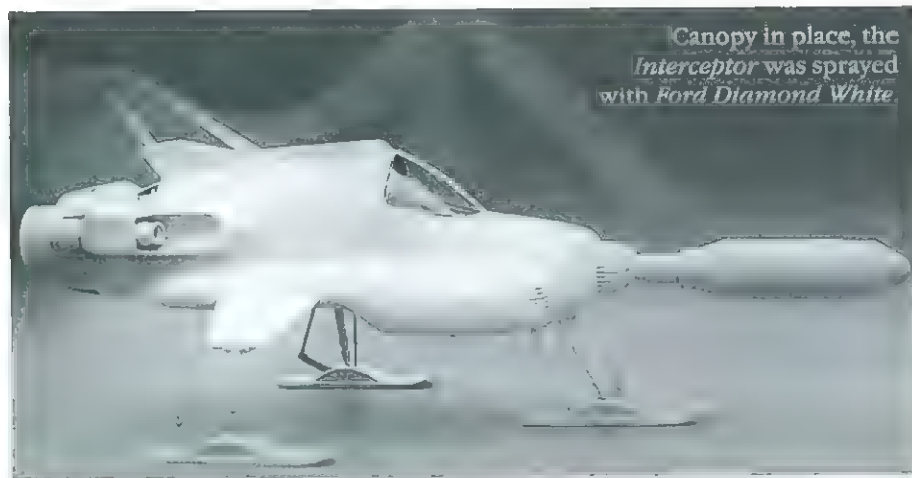
this forms a distinct curve when, in fact, viewing from the side, the *Interceptor* canopy 'edge' should form a perfectly straight diagonal from the top of the canopy opening to the bottom. Obviously there is nothing you can do about this other than scratchbuilding a former to the correct dimensions and heat-forming a new canopy—but that's a *lot* of work.

Tail fin

The delicate 'open' tail strut with its triangular top fin is supplied as two resin parts. Because the strut is a framework as opposed to a solid piece resin is not the ideal choice of material for this section. The strut supplied was bowed and, although improvements to the shape *were* achieved, immersion in hot water to soften the part (followed by instant immersion in cold water to set it in its new position) only resulted in partially corrected dimensions. I therefore recommend you discard the strut and, if you are able, scratchbuild a replacement from metal. If you don't yet have the skills or tools to do this (like me!), laminated thick *plasticard* based on the dimensions of the resin part would serve the purpose.

The top fin is too long—its dimensions should, according to shots of studio miniatures, correspond to





those of the tail strut exactly, not overlapping at front or back. I therefore measured the piece against the top of the strut and razor-sawed off the excess across the back of the fin. The part was then epoxied to the top of the strut and, keeping an eye on the clock, the strut was epoxied to the body. Had I not been working to deadlines (and had I intended to keep the original resin part) I would have drilled and pinned both 'arms' of the piece and the body to result in a join with more strength.

Painting

After a thorough inspection of the model to put right any rough or blemished areas I might have missed I gave the *Interceptor* (having first masked off the canopy) a thorough coating of filler-primer which, after being left to dry for a couple of days, was carefully sanded down to as smooth a finish as I could achieve. The model was then sprayed with *Ford Diamond White* and again left to dry for forty-eight hours. The missile was also painted at this time and left to dry. When the paint had hardened sufficiently I set about tackling those gaps around the canopy. The original models featured a thin frame of large rubber around the edges of the canopy where it meets the body and down both sides of the central strut. I

therefore used black electrical wiring to mimic this around all the edges excepting those pesky gaps. To bridge these I dug out an old electrical transformer with a double width of black, plastic-coated wire and carefully glued shaped lengths of this around the bottom edges of the canopy—not a perfect solution, as these pieces remain flimsy and pliable, but the only one I could think of other than starting from scratch.

Next up I masked off all the areas that would remain white so that I could overspray silver onto the model. Silver areas include the engine

intake/exhaust sections and nozzles/engine bells, engine, missile holding 'cap', leg struts, skis, front intakes and leading edges of the wings. Silver detailing such as the band around the cockpit canopy and strips along the front edges of the tail fin were added courtesy of R/C car adhesive pinstripping tape, as was contrast panelling on the rear engine and side intake/exhausts. The anti-glare panel was masked off at the same time and sprayed matt black (purists take note—the anti-glare panel on the studio miniatures was actually a very dark *green*. I didn't have any 'in stock' and the countdown to publication was proceeding at a pace).

Panelling on the original models was achieved with nothing more complex than a ballpoint pen. Copying the pattern of lines as closely as I could and dragging my pen against strips of masking tape to achieve straight edges on the curved surfaces, I therefore drew on the distinctive arrangement of oblongs and ellipses that can be seen on the studio *Interceptors*.

Black R/C car pinstripping was cut to lengths and inserted in the 'troughs' of the front intakes. This is a time consuming exercise but results in a neater finish than paint could achieve and gives the intakes 'depth'.

Decals

The one area where this kit excels is its decal sheet. The studio *Interceptors* fairly bristled with signage and markings, and these have been authentically recreated as an excellent sheet of waterslides—right down to the misspelling of the word 'connecting' (spelt 'conecting' on the large original) in a decal destined for



the missile's side. You are given only vague indications as to where this feast of bits and pieces go, so you will need to track down good shots of the originals in order to place them correctly (this shouldn't prove too difficult—look no further than the issue of the magazine you are holding plus a forthcoming photo-blueprint). Strangely, the distinctive red striping seen on both the missile and body of the *Interceptor* is not supplied with the kit. These markings were quickly and easily created from red R/C car pinstripping tape, however.

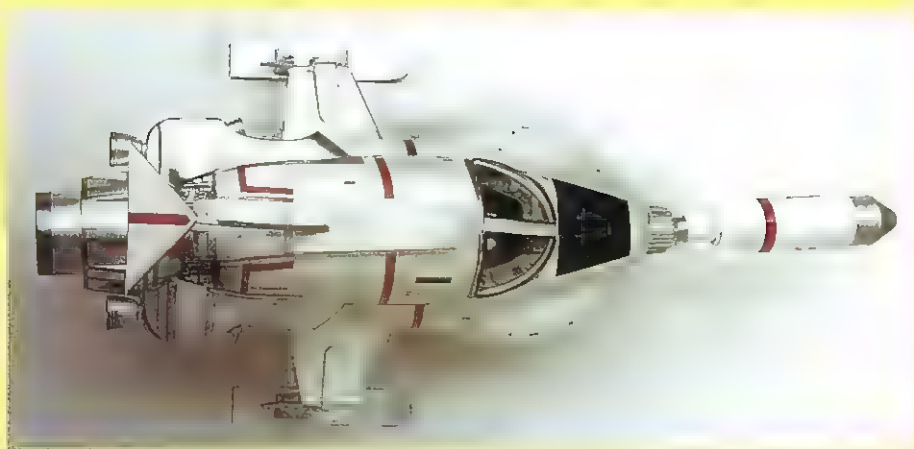
Weathering

The original *Interceptors* were weathered, but the studio lighting and transmission resolution in many cases 'bleached out' much of this dirtying down, leaving the models looking, for the most part, pristine white in footage from the show. If you don't dirty your model down it will look too bright and toy-like. I therefore suggest subtle application of graphite powder (or a very light airbrushing of black) around the nose, missile 'cap', nozzles, engine and fronts of the bulges. This helps to define the *Interceptor's* contours, gives it 'weight' and makes it appear much more realistic.

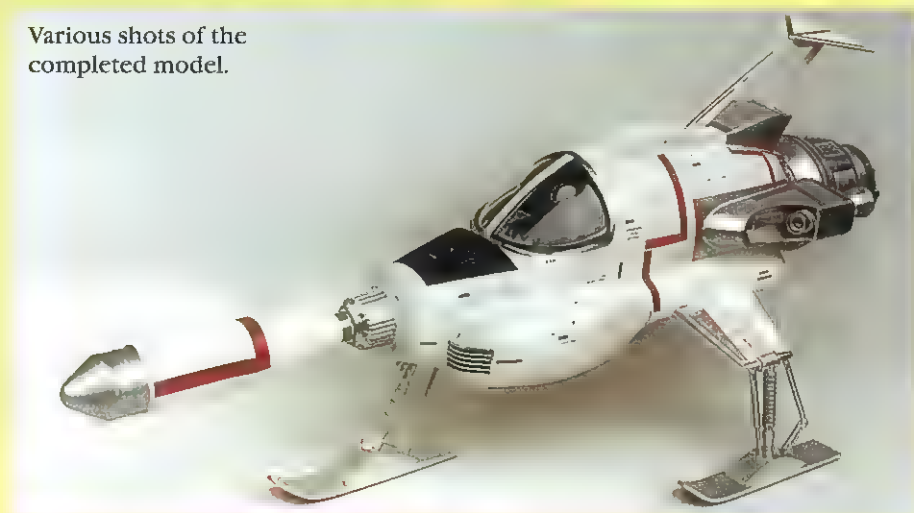
Summary

If you are a genre modeller with sufficient general interest in UFO to warrant you buying this kit, and are not overly concerned with the accuracy of every curve and straight line, then you should find that *ENA's Moonbase Interceptor* builds for you into a large, impressive model that will be the centre of conversation in any collection. If, however, you are like me and demand as much accuracy as possible from your Anderson replica models, you will end up feeling that the ultimate *Moonbase Interceptor* kit has yet to be produced. I leave you to decide for yourselves, however—compare the dimensions of the model against those of the actual large studio miniatures shown in this magazine. If you can live with the differences and are a moderately skilled garage kit builder able to adapt and convert then you can buy this kit with some degree of confidence. If you aren't, then keep your fingers crossed that *ENA* will retool the subject at a later date, or that a more accurate version will eventually be released.

Review kit kindly supplied
by Comet Miniatures. 



Various shots of the
completed model.



Director's Cut

A guide to DVD FX-tra features

sarah hemmingway • jack marshall

Thunderbirds: the complete series

Limited Edition 9 DVD Box Set.
Carlton, Region 2.

As this issue is dedicated to the late Derek Meddings it seems appropriate to review the latest Gerry Anderson offering on DVD from Carlton this time round. Following the release of their eight individual **Thunderbirds** DVDs the company has packaged all thirty two episodes of the series together, added a ninth disc—*The Thunderbirds Companion*—and presented the lot as a true boxed set (ie: a glossy, sturdy, well presented slipcase in which can be found a separate box which holds the DVDs).

Said *Thunderbirds Companion* is a hour (-ish) long documentary with one of the surviving *Brains* puppets as your host. In this new footage the inventor of the *Thunderbirds* machines looks not a minute older than he did in 1965 (what's your secret, bespectacled-one?). Unfortunately he seems to have lost some of his ability to move convincingly (a puppet form of arthritis, no doubt) and strings are very much in evidence. The material he introduces from his laboratory consists of a variety of voice-overed clips from various episodes under category headings—ie: *the Machines, the Characters, the Secrets, the Making Of*, interspersed with all too brief comments from series creator Gerry Anderson; David Graham (the voice of *Parker, Brains* and *Gordon Tracy*); writer and director Alan Patillo; art director Bob Bell; puppeteer David Blundall and puppetry supervisor Mary Turner. Tacked on to the end of the feature is a short black and white featurette produced in 1965. This is the real gem of the piece, with the documentary

team having visited various locations within the studios during production: the puppet workshop whilst characters were being created (*Lady Penelope*, usually seen in her *Roller*, is here seen in rollers); the model shop with staff working on miniature buildings and sets; Gerry Anderson at a time when his puppet programmes were at the peak of their popularity (his comments regarding the option of one day working with live actors are, with hindsight, extremely amusing) and the sadly missed Derek Meddings, who talks with infectious enthusiasm about his model and FX work for **Thunderbirds**.



And that's about it as far as the extra disc is concerned—something of a disappointment when you consider that much of its footage consists of clips from programmes that are

already contained in the same box, and that several of the DVDs in turn include clips from the *Thunderbirds Companion* as part of their 'extra features' line-up! One or two archive nuggets *are* to be found on some of the other discs, however. There's the colour *Making of Thunderbirds* featurette filmed, I would guess, in early 1965 and first included as an unearthed archive extra on the Polygram video releases of the '80s. Also a rare delight are the four 60's **Thunderbirds** colour TV commercials Carlton have tracked down—two for the *Zoom* ice lolly, one for several Anderson-themed *Lyon's Maid* ice-creams and the last for Kellogg's *Sugar Smacks*. A selection of gallery archive still material can also be accessed on the various discs, including a history of the legendary *TV21* comic, an original *ITC* promotional brochure and colour merchandising specification sheets featuring photographs of characters and hardware. This material will have

older **Thunderbirds** fans and genre modellers wearing out their zoom buttons.

I have to say that, archive ads and featurettes aside, the FX-stras offered as part of this package are little more than adequate. There has to be far more out there in the way of **Thunderbirds** related footage that could have been included—more interviews with puppeteers, special effects people and voice artists, for example (for that matter, *lengthier* interviews with the key people who *are* featured); a look at some of the puppets that have survived to present day; the **Thunderbirds** 80's *Swinton Insurance* ad featuring Steve Begg's FX direction and David Sisson's *FAB 1*; material from the two feature films; Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's classic *Superthunderstingcar* spoof; the live action *FAB* stage show (love it or loathe it, it does have relevance in a compilation) etc, etc.

Fortunately, each episode of **Thunderbirds** is, in itself, if you think about it, one big special effect from beginning to end, and the saving grace of this boxed set lies in its episodes rather than its extras. Here Carlton give you the opportunity to own, as bright, sharp, crystal clear DVD footage that won't degrade with subsequent viewings, every episode of a series that is packed with miniatures, marionettes, explosions, excitement and the talents of an FX team so skilled that their work refuses to die and is as popular in the twenty first century as it was when first screened in the UK in black and white mid-way through the swinging sixties. Yes, the FX-stras could have been far better, but the programme itself has been bettered by none...

...In short, better start saving; Carlton's **Thunderbirds** boxed set blasts off at around £124.00.

J. M.

Special FX features verdict:
FX-stras—unremarkable.
Episodes—unbeatable +.



Derek Meddings' contribution to the world of special effects can justifiably be described as 'immeasurable'. His miniature effects work, still enjoyed in classic television programmes such as *Fireball XL5*, *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet* and the *Mysterons* and *UFO*, served as inspiration to a generation of effects technicians currently at work in the industry. Not only did Derek take on the mantle of special effects innovator during his time at AP Films/Century 21 Productions, he also served as designer, set dresser, lighting technician and camera operator. There was no aspect of the miniature effects seen in these much loved programmes in which Derek was not thoroughly involved.

In his quest for realism and acceptance of miniatures within the industry Derek pioneered the use of kit parts to enhance many of his designs. The now common technique of 'dirtying down' was a further cause championed by Meddings and his small but gifted team working at the Stirling Road studio complex in Slough during the 1960s.

Looking back on his early days in the business, Derek would often recollect his relationship and time spent with another legendary special effects pioneer, Les Bowie. The veteran Bowie would encourage and advise the young Meddings and ensure his work gained the credit and recognition it deserved. Derek would later give

similar credit to those assisting him with the effects seen in Gerry Anderson's programmes. People such as gifted designer Mike Trim, and Brian Johnson, a now world famous name himself for his work on *Alien*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Space:1999*, were regularly mentioned by Derek, amongst many others, as colleagues whose assistance he considered invaluable.

Whereas many of today's FX technicians sit at a computer screen, Derek was never happier than when up to his waist in water, on his knees putting the finishing touches to a landscape miniature, or donning a hard hat to supervise one of his trademark explosions. To many Derek will always be regarded as the consummate

A tribute

special effects man. When he joined the *007* production team in 1972 as work began on *Live and Let Die* he was responsible for both the miniatures and floor effects filmed at *Pinewood Studios*. Derek was largely responsible, too, for the building and maintenance of the ramps used to create the spectacular 'leaping' speedboats seen in the chase sequence in the Louisiana bayou.

It was, however, with the 1977 Roger Moore outing *The Spy Who Loved Me* that Meddings began to make a contribution to a series that mirrored his achievements in the earlier Anderson programmes. The miniatures, created by Derek and team, of *Stromberg's* undersea bastion, *Atlantis* and, of course, *Q's* most adaptable of creations, the re-designed *Lotus Esprit*, were two of the finest seen in any *EON* production up to that point. Better still was to come. His later work in *Moonraker*, *For Your Eyes Only* and the film which would put the *007* series back at the top of the industry in terms of box-



Opposite: Bond & Beyond brochure. Above: The Meddings family.

and with partner Lee Pfeiffer of *The Ian Fleming Foundation*. During the course of our conversation we jointly noted that there were a vast number of common links between Anderson productions and *007* features. Without prompting Dave mentioned Derek's name, unaware that *Fanderson* had been discussing the possibility of a tribute event dedicated to the effects genius for some time. An agreement was made. A handshake sealed matters. The tribute would be a joint venture.

In the year that followed both clubs worked tirelessly together with the intention of staging a worthy tribute to Derek and his contributions to a host of television and cinematic productions.

UFO Special

te to Derek Meddings

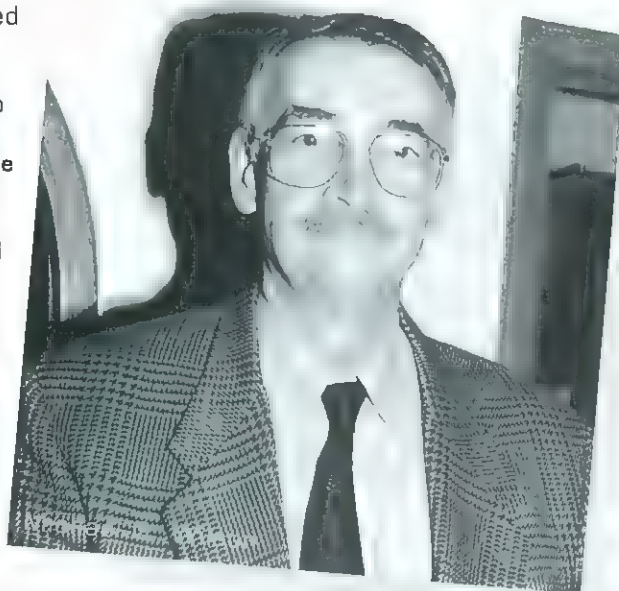
martin gainsford

office returns, *Goldeneye*, was of such high standard that on many occasions those viewing daily rushes were mistakenly under the impression they were watching 'full size' effects sequences.

Derek's work also reached beyond Anderson productions and *007* movies. His contribution to features such as *The Land That Time Forgot*, *Krull*, *Cape Fear*, *Batman* and, of course, the *Superman* series—for which he would win an *OSCAR*—was as spectacular and realistic as anything he was ever responsible for. It is, however, with *Century 21* productions and the *007* films that his name will be forever linked and it was with much pride that *Fanderson* and The *James Bond Collectors Club* joined forces to pay tribute to Derek in May 2000.

In April 1999 a chance meeting took place on the set of *The World Is Not Enough* in

London's docklands, used as the locale for the now famous pre-credit boat chase. I found myself in conversation with Dave Worrall, founder of *The James Bond Collectors Club*



and one of the world's most respected *Bond* authorities following his penning of many entertaining and informative books on the subject, both alone

Fanderson concentrated on liaising with the venue, the magnificent *Pictureville* in Bradford, Yorkshire, UK. Part of the *National Museum Of Photography, Film & Television*, it houses *The Broccoli Cinema*. Andrew Staton, *Fanderson* honorary member and Chris Bentley, club chairman, worked closely with the cinema to arrange a two day programme incorporating screenings of shows such as *Thunderbirds*, *UFO* and *Captain Scarlet* along with later productions Derek contributed to including *Neverending Story 2*, *Krull* and Tim Burton's *Batman*.

With the event now titled *Bond and Beyond: The Movie Magic of Derek Meddings*, it was apparent that *EON Productions'* *007* movies needed extensive coverage. Derek's work would be showcased via some of the most spectacular and effects-reliant films in the series. All of the *Bond* films proved immensely



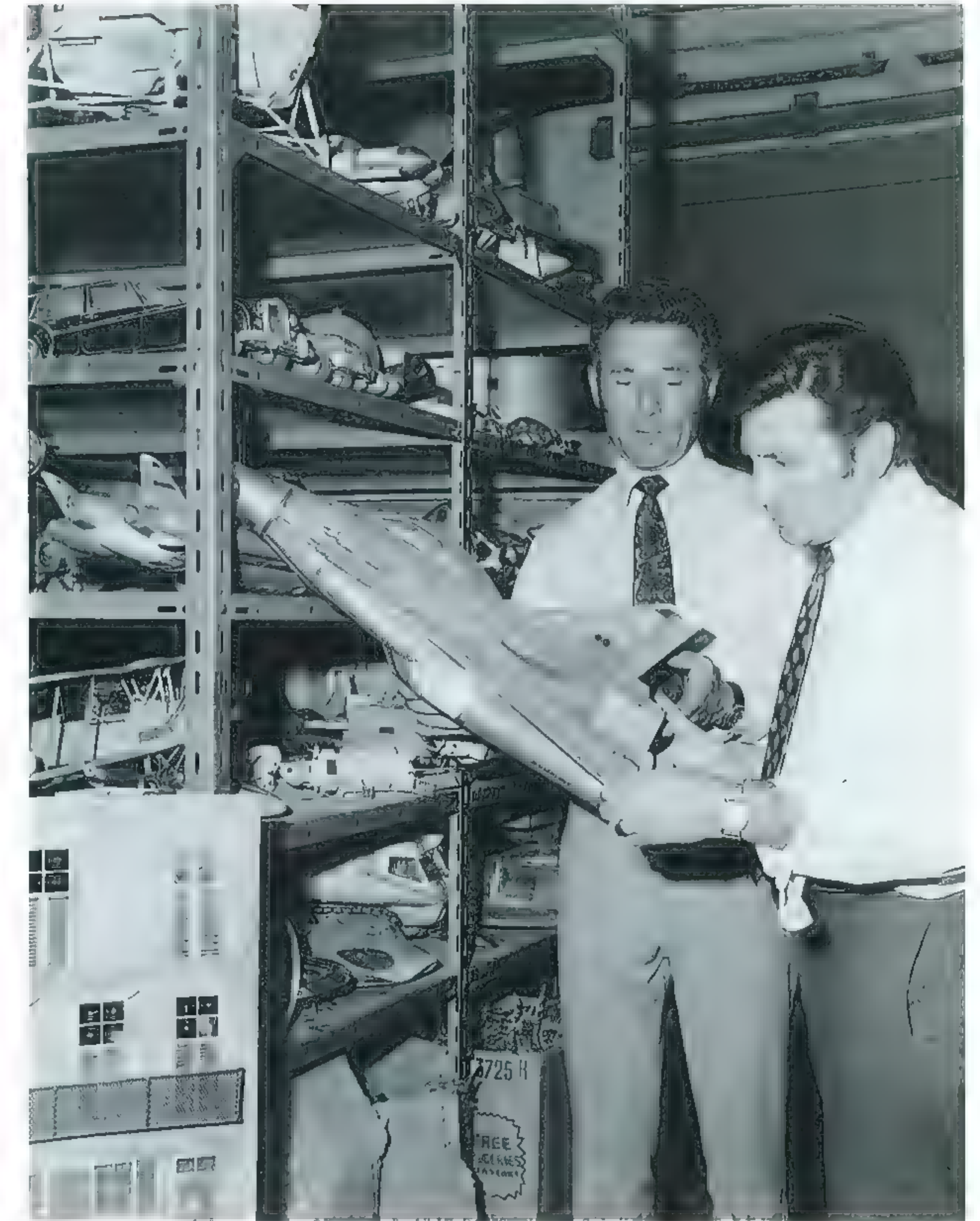
Above and far right: Derek (right) with Ken Holt in the **UFO** miniature props store. Below: Derek discusses an effect on the set of **UFO** (photos courtesy Phil Ree.) Centre: On the set of **Goldeneye** with Pierce Brosnan (photo from brochure).



popular with event attendees. The critical and often very knowledgeable viewer of today, regaled by superb CGI effects seen in films such as **Jurassic Park**, **Armageddon** and **Gladiator**, nonetheless cannot fail to be stunned by the skill of Derek and his team. **Bond** movies such as **The Spy Who Loved Me**, **Moonraker** and his last picture, **Goldeneye**—dedicated to his memory on its release, were as spectacular on *The Pictureville*'s big screen as when first seen by the public—in the case of 'Spy' and **Moonraker**, more than two decades ago.

Both *Fanderson* and *The James Bond Collectors Club* were pleased to learn that *Carlton International Media Limited*, who now own the rights to Gerry Anderson's series, and *EON Productions*, were in full support of the event. The two companies recognised the

importance of this long overdue tribute. Indeed, such is the respect those involved with the **007** films in particular have for Derek that, over the weekend, we were able to greet some of the most vital members of the **007** production team. Acting as guest liaison representative for the event, Dave was thrilled to inform the rest of the organisers that we would be enjoying the company of OSCAR-winning art director/production designer, Peter Lamont. Known world over for his work on features such as **Aliens**, **True Lies** and **Titanic**, Peter forged a strong friendship with Derek whilst working with him on many **Bond** films. We were also delighted to have the involvement of the man—along with Barbara Broccoli—who is now responsible for the **007** series... Michael G Wilson. Stepson of the late Cubby



Broccoli, Michael gave a lengthy talk covering Derek's contribution to **Bond** and introduced a host of behind the scenes clips and photographs he had personally put together as part of his presentation. Such is the respect and admiration Michael has for Derek and his work. Peter, too, took the stage and regaled attendees with many stories about Derek and both he and Michael were happy to take part in a question and answer session co-ordinated by Chris Bentley and Dave Worrall.

The event organisers were able to screen two documentaries featuring Derek and his work on the Anderson series and **Bond** films. The first was made by *Kindred Productions*. A name familiar to those who follow the Anderson series, *Kindred's* film chronicled Derek's work on the

Supermarionation programmes, featured previously unseen footage of Meddings talking candidly about his time with Gerry and Sylvia Anderson and also included rare behind the scenes clips from the classic live-action series **UFO**. *Kindred's* tribute, compiled by Tim Mallet, was much welcomed and screened twice during the weekend.

The second filmed tribute was also produced specifically for the event by two members of *The Ian Fleming Foundation*—professional film makers Paul Scrabo and his wife George Ann Muller. The thirty minute documentary highlighted superbly Derek's contribution to **Bond**. As with *Kindred's* production, the piece contained many of his best known effects sequences plus previously unseen interview footage. This



Above and far right: Derek [right] with Ken Holt in the **UFO** miniature props store. Below: Derek discusses an effect on the set of **UFO** (photos courtesy Phil Ræe.) Centre: On the set of **Goldeneye** with Pierce Brosnan (photo from brochure).

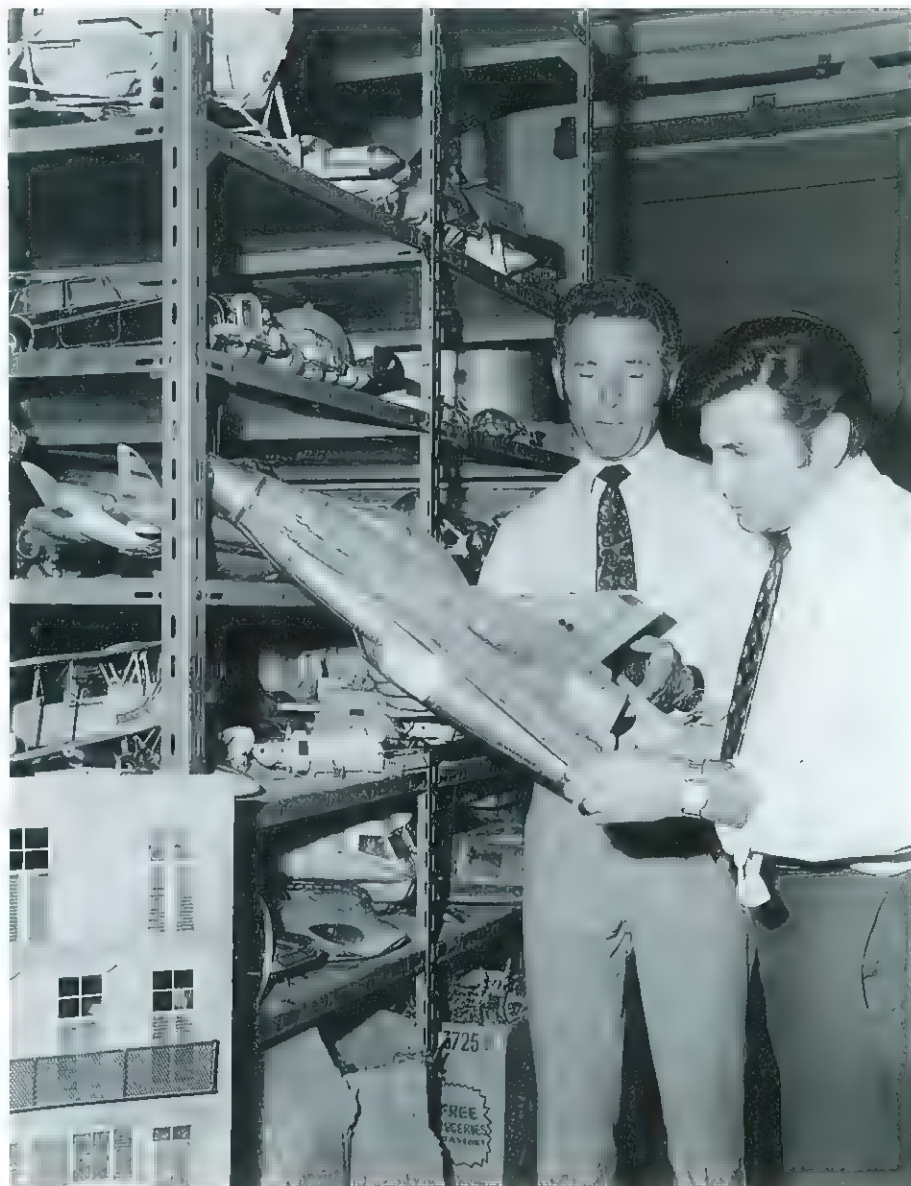


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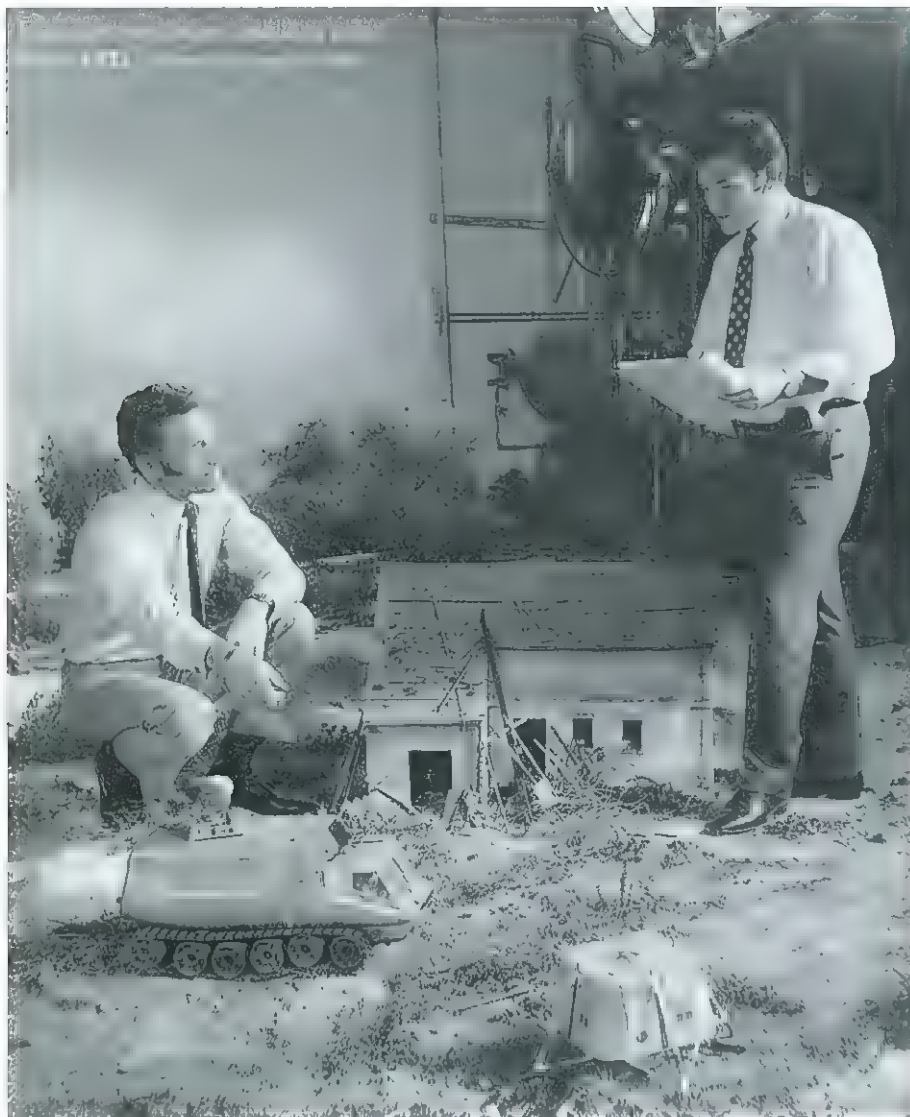


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proved both entertaining and touching, as the interview had taken place on the set of *Goldeneye* in 1995, just a short time before Derek's untimely passing. Paul and George Ann's professional skills, along with their knowledge and understanding of *Bond* films, are currently being utilised by MGM/UA for production of much of the 'special features' interview footage to be found on their *007* DVD releases. Hailing from the 'States, Paul and George Ann travelled to Bradford to pay tribute to Derek in person and their film was most fitting.

The loyal team of *Fanderson* members who own original items from Anderson programmes once more enabled the organisers to stage a magnificent exhibition. Original puppets from *Supercar*, *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet*, *Joe 90* and *The Secret Service* were

on display along with an extensive collection of original and studio-standard replica vehicles from the various programmes. Attendees were delighted to come face to face with many of the best loved Anderson characters including *Alan Tracy*, *Jimmy Gibson* and *Joe 90*. Many *Spectrum* agents were present including their most valued member, *Captain Scarlet*. The assistance of *Fanderson* members Bob Bailey, Chris King and Derek Dorking in particular was most welcome. Derek, although unable to attend in person, allowed us to exhibit items from his *007* collection such as original costumes from *Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker* along with a prop laser rifle from the 1979 Lewis Gilbert helmed outer space *Bond* epic. As has become the norm at events such as these, the vehicles on display were courtesy of two people familiar to readers of SF-

FX, Phil Rae and David Sisson. A magnificent replica of the classic Anderson craft *Fireball XL5* dominated one end of the display area, this model continuing to prove a popular part of *Fanderson* exhibits. Other studio-standard replica vehicles such as the *Spectrum Patrol Car*, *Maximum Security Vehicle* and, of course, various *Thunderbirds*, highlighted the talents of the modest but incredibly gifted Mr. Sisson. Gaining the lion's share of attendees' attentions were Phil Rae's studio originals of *Sky 1* and two *Interceptors* from *UFO*. Another 'star' was one of *Spectrum's* strike force from *Scarlet*, an *Angel Jet*. These vehicles gave attendees a chance, first hand, to witness the skill of Meddings as a designer plus the skills of his model building team. Designed and built over thirty years ago these models would still appear totally acceptable in any production today.

Without question the one aspect of the event which elevated it to a height greater than any achieved by similar exhibits in recent years was the attendance of the Meddings family. Headed by Elliott, a successful director who has worked on the last three *007* movies amongst many other productions, the family are a more fitting tribute to Derek than any event could ever be. They are some of the nicest people it has been my pleasure to meet. Elliott, Nick, Noah and Chloe are, like their father, people of good nature, humour, consideration and warmth. Throughout the weekend they were happy to speak with admirers of their father's work. They made no distinction between those professionals in attendance and teenagers who had recently come to learn of Derek's work through repeat screenings of the Anderson shows or video releases of the *007* movies. Screenings of the documentaries proved rather emotional for family and close friends as many had not seen such footage since his passing. They applauded, however, the passion and skill so obvious in the documentaries' creation and

thanked those involved for putting together such touching tributes.

The family were excited to hear the stories behind many of the original puppets and models on display as they had themselves played with similar items as children. Nick and Noah Meddings remembered playing with *Superman* figures as well as suitably scaled cars and trucks which Derek had brought home for them after filming had been completed on the Christopher Reeve classic. Similarly, and to the horror of many, Elliott related how he recalled hours spent in the garden as a child throwing around *UFOs* from the programme of the same name. Nothing was too much trouble for the Meddings family and friends who had accompanied them from the London area for the weekend. They posed for photographs, signed autographs and generally found time for everyone who wanted to speak to them.

Perhaps the highlight of the entire event for many was the first public display of much of Derek's original pre-production design artwork. We were offered the opportunity to allow admirers of Derek's design skills to see these masterpieces by the Meddings family. Some had been seen previously in *SF-FX* and others published in the Sam Mitchell book *21st Century Visions*. We were, however, able to display an abundance of pieces never previously made public and these were nothing short of breathtaking. Vehicles from feature films *Thunderbirds Are Go*, *Thunderbird 6* and the series which spawned them were crowd pleasers, as were equally stunning designs from *Doppelganger*, a much underrated film containing some of Derek's most impressive work. One of the most interesting aspects of this side of the event was the chance for people to compare Derek's original designs with the actual models which ultimately embodied his visions on screen. The *Angel Jet* and *SHADO Interceptor* were of particular interest as the original sketches for both

vehicles were very close to how they finally appeared. Members of the Meddings family themselves were stunned by the skill and ingenuity of their father and his team. Although well aware of his achievements, to them Derek was 'Dad'. After spending much time in conversation with those in attendance, many of whom were industry people themselves, Elliott, his brothers and sister were touched by the admiration and enthusiasm people have for their father's work.

Fanderson was privileged to have been able to stage this event in conjunction with *The James Bond Collectors Club*. As a *007* fan, I have long admired Dave Worrall's work and, witnessing his skills at an event in close quarters, I am now fully appreciative of the reasons *EON* and *MGM/UA* are so keen to involve him in various projects. Similarly, Chris Bentley, author of *Carlton Book's The Complete Thunderbirds*, co-hosted proceedings magnificently. His twenty page brochure for the event (still available via *Fanderson Sales* to non-members too. *Plug, Plug!*) is destined to become a much sought-after collectable.

The event was an absolute pleasure to have been involved in. It brought together admirers of Medding's work who were able to pay tribute to a man who created wonderful miniature vehicles and worlds that, to this day, have yet to be equalled in terms of originality, realism and sheer spectacle.

I was fortunate to have met Derek, very briefly, on two occasions. Although always reasonably calm when confronted by those I admire or those I am familiar with through their work on television or

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film, I was virtually lost for words. This event allowed many of his admirers, who had never had the chance to say previously, "Derek. Thank you."

*Martin Gainsford is a member of
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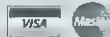
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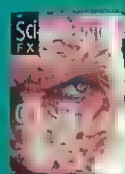
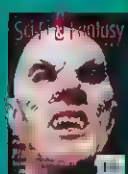


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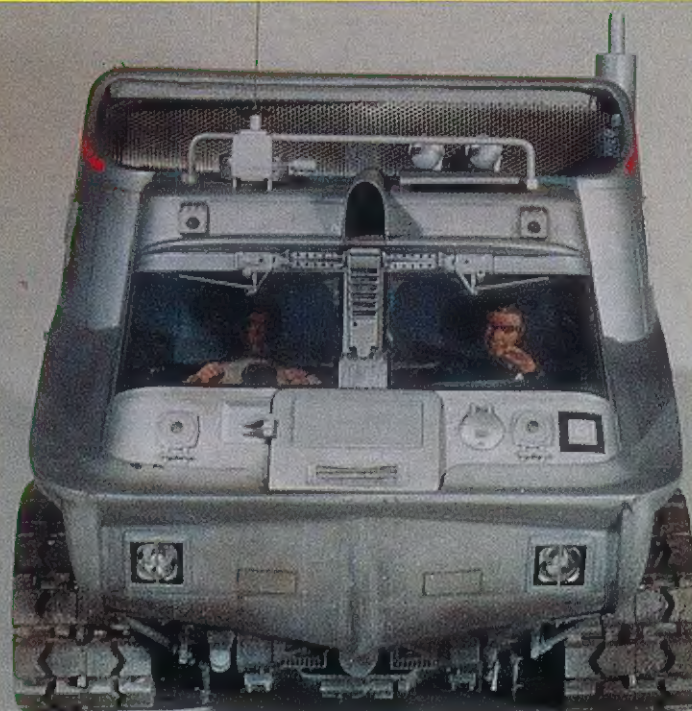
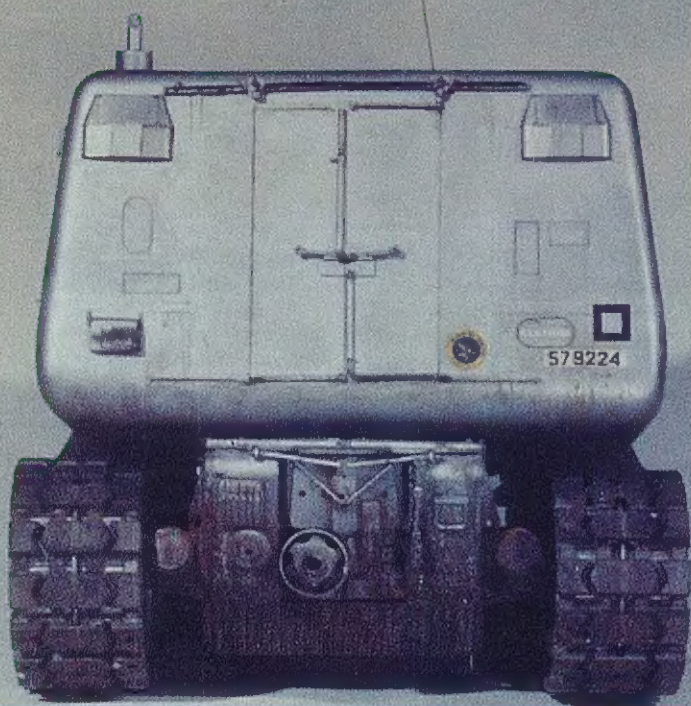
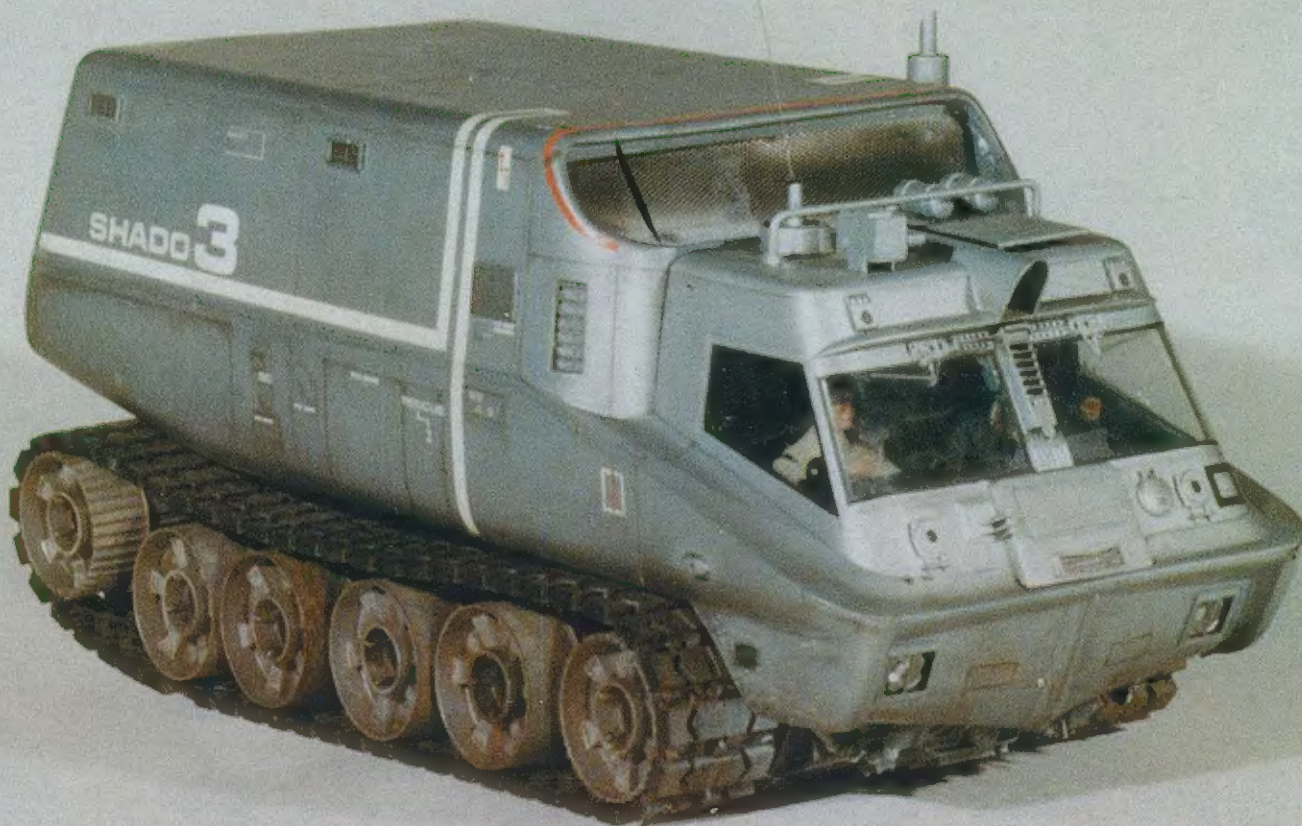
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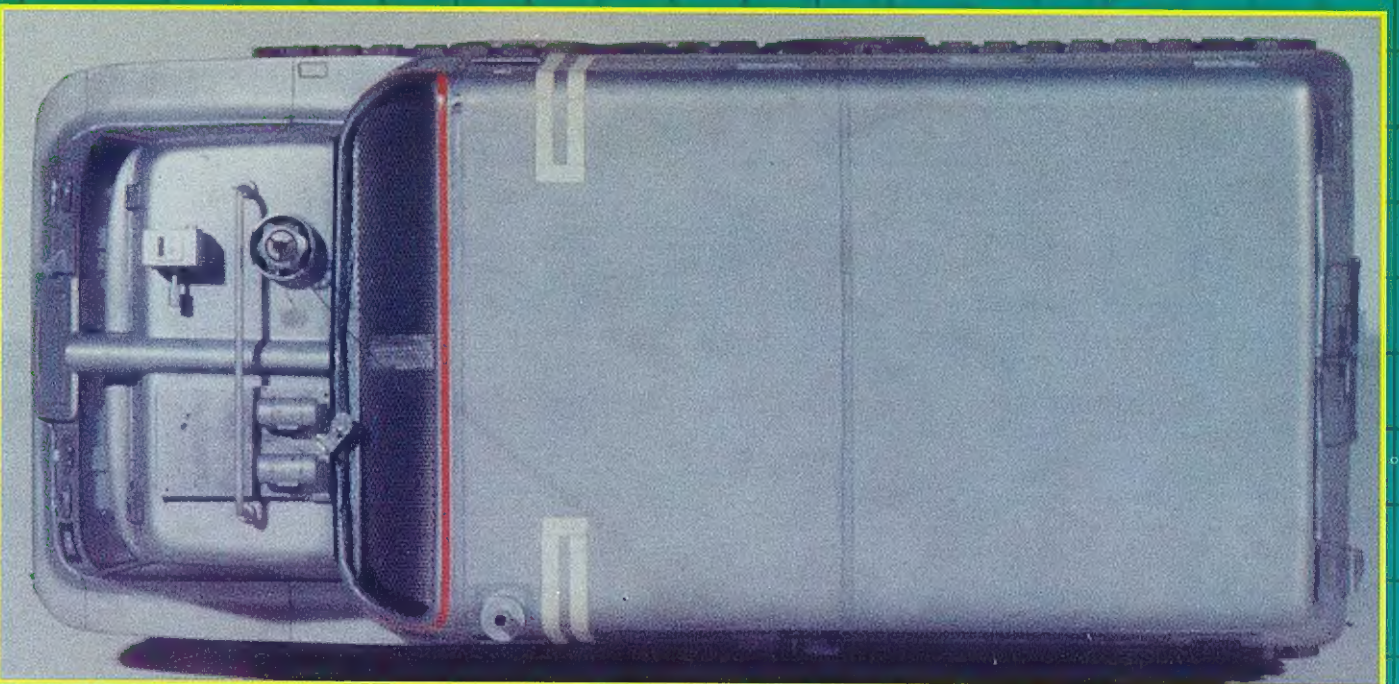
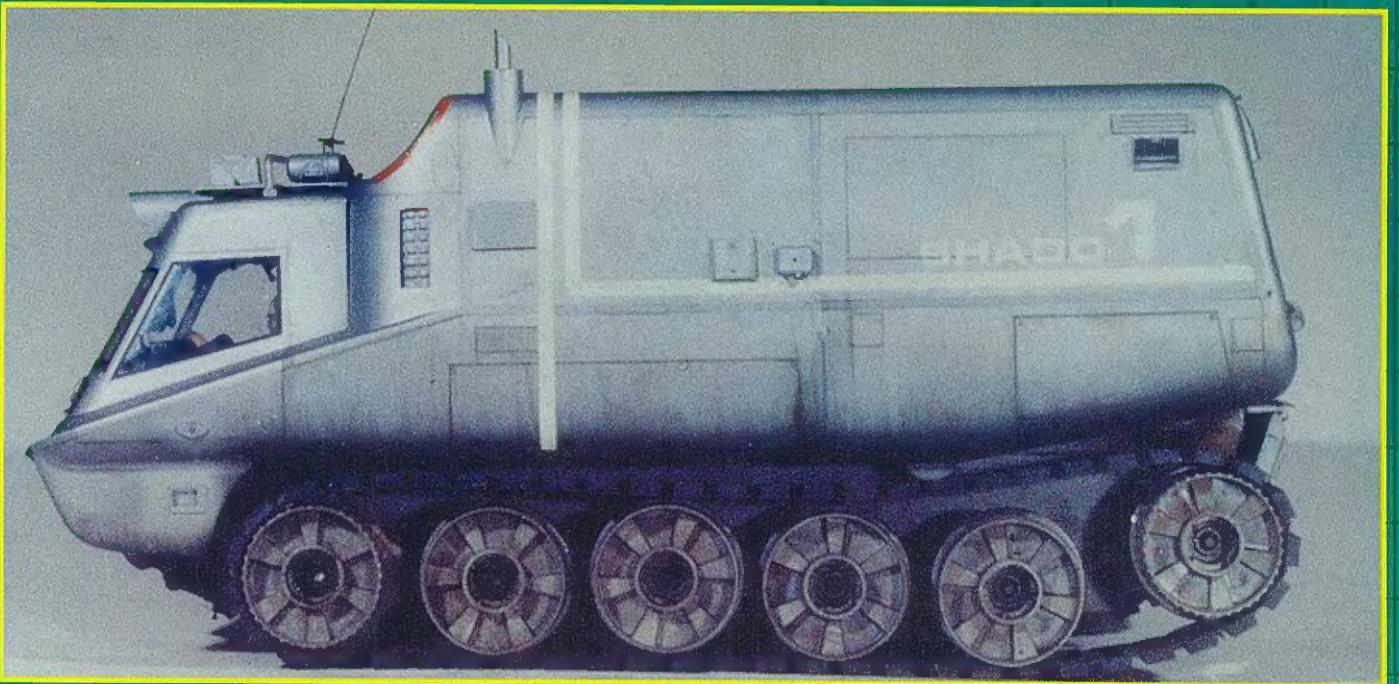
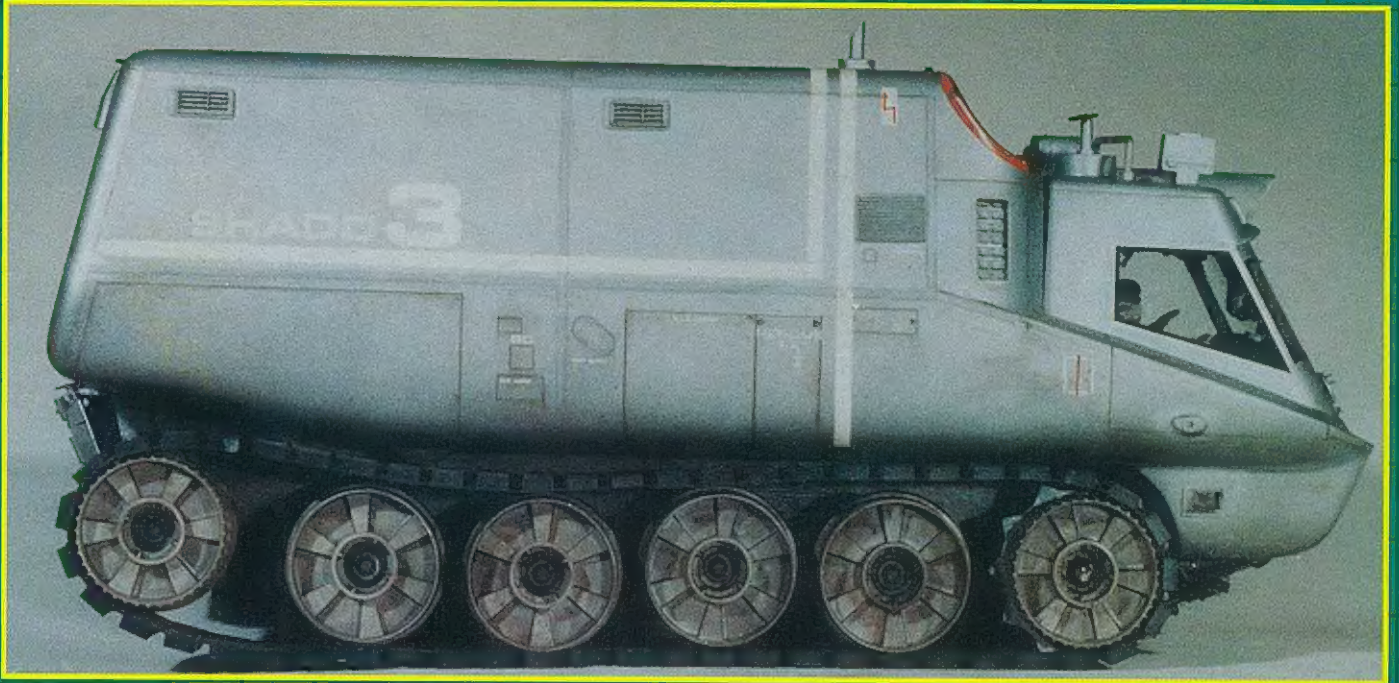
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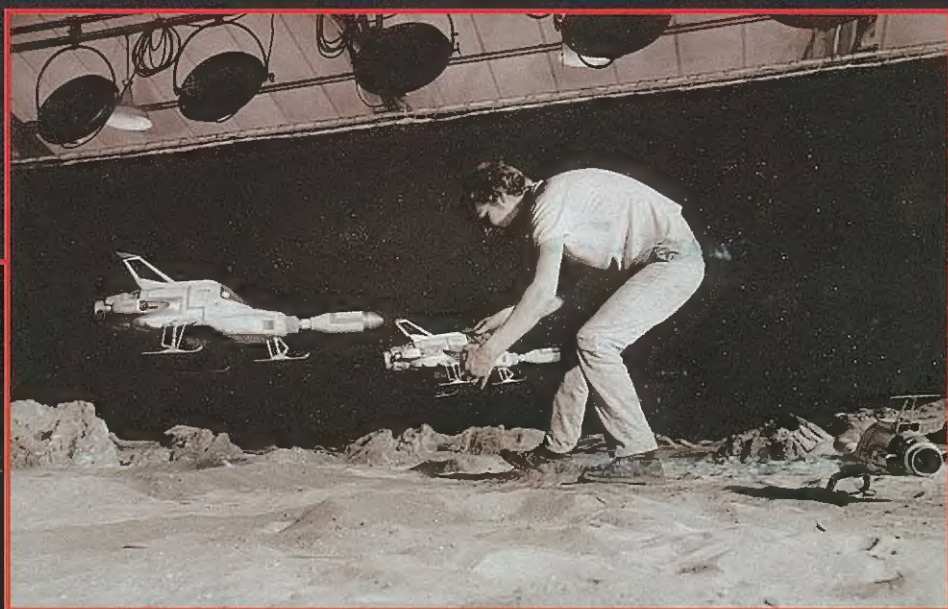
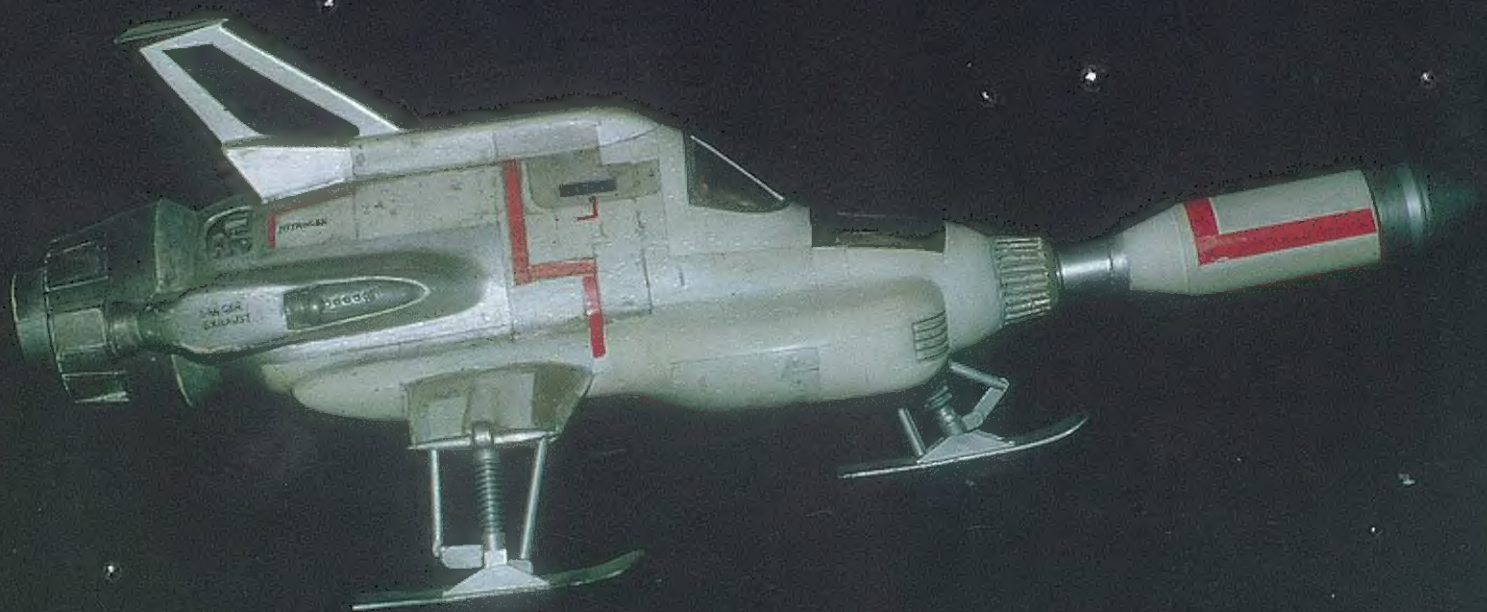


Here we present the first in a series of 'photo-blueprints' featuring the original miniatures of UFO.

Next issue: Space Intruder Detector.

Photos courtesy of Phil Rae.





Top: small version *Interceptor* miniature. Centre and below: filming large scale *Interceptor* miniatures. Photos courtesy Phil Rae.





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